



Role of School Based Guidance and Counselling in Students' Self-Assertive Goal Achievement in Kinondoni Public Secondary Schools, Tanzania

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Abstract : This study investigated the role of school-based guidance and counselling programme in enhancing students' self-assertive goal achievement in five selected public secondary schools (Schools A-E). It was guided by three objectives: to evaluate the availability of guidance and counselling programme and their influence on students' self-assertiveness, to examine the effectiveness of programme implementation mechanisms in supporting students' personal goals, and to investigate the role of career guidance activities on student's self assertive goal achievement . Person-Centred Theory by Carl Rogers guided this study and employed a mixed-methods approach using a convergent parallel research design. It involved 60 participants including, 50 student 5 head of schools and 5 Guidance and Counselling teachers, were selected through simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that guidance and counselling programme were available in all selected schools and positively influenced students' confidence, decision-making, self-assertiveness, and goal-setting behaviour. It was also found that career guidance activities helped students identify their abilities, understand career opportunities, and establish realistic academic and career goals. However, the study disclosed that the effectiveness of these programme was constrained by shortages of trained personnel, inadequate facilities and counselling materials, limited time allocation, and weak monitoring and evaluation systems. Despite these challenges, the programme contributed significantly to students' academic motivation, personal development, and future career planning.

Keyword : Guidance, counselling, school-based, self-assertiveness, goal-setting, behaviour, career

Article info: Submitted : 2026-08-13 | Accepted : 2026-10-01 | Published : 2026-10-02

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, the role of school-based guidance and counselling programme had become increasingly significant, particularly in fostering students' self-assertiveness and supporting the achievement of their personal goals. Assertiveness, defined as the ability to express ideas, opinions, and feelings clearly and respectfully, had emerged as an essential attribute for both teachers and students, promoting relationships based on mutual respect and trust (Suarez et al., 2024). In today's rapidly changing society, students were increasingly required to develop self-assertiveness to navigate personal, social, and academic challenges effectively. Self-assertiveness enabled students to express their needs confidently, make informed decisions, and pursue their personal goals. However, many students continued to struggle with low self-confidence, poor decision-making skills, and passive behaviour, which hindered their academic achievement and personal development (Golshiri et al., 2023; Parray & Kumar, 2022).

Globally, formal vocational guidance initiatives were introduced to assist young people in transitioning from school to employment. The enactment of the Education (Choice of Employment) Act of 1910 marked a significant milestone by empowering local education authorities to provide career advice and support to school leavers seeking employment (Hooley et

al., 2019). Guidance system emphasized personalized counselling, whereby each student was assigned a qualified guidance counsellor who provided continuous and tailored support. These services assisted learners in identifying personal goals, strengthening self-awareness, and developing self-assertiveness. This coordinated and welfare-oriented model demonstrated how structured guidance services contributed to students' personal development and future planning.

In Africa, the educational landscape had been characterized by significant diversity and persistent socio-economic disparities, which directly influenced learners' academic progression, psycho-social well-being, and career development. Recent studies showed that comprehensive school counselling services contributed significantly to learners' resilience, career adaptability, and self-confidence, particularly when supported by effective school leadership and appropriate policy frameworks (Maree, 2021). In Moreover, school counselling initiatives had increasingly been recognised as important mechanisms for supporting students facing academic pressure, uncertainty regarding employment opportunities, and complex socio-cultural expectations in a rapidly changing society. Secondary schools had progressively incorporated mentorship programmes that connected students

with teachers, community leaders, and professionals who provided career guidance, psychosocial support, and motivational encouragement.

In Tanzania, guidance and counselling programs had been introduced in many government secondary schools as part of efforts to enhance students' psycho social well-being, academic development, and personal growth (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MoEST], 2022). These programs were designed to assist students in developing self-assertiveness by enabling them to communicate their needs effectively, resist negative peer influence, make informed decisions, and establish realistic personal and career goals. However, despite the existence of policy frameworks supporting guidance and counselling services, their implementation remained challenging in many schools. A study by Mushi and Malusu (2017) revealed that factors such as negative teacher attitudes, limited professional training among guidance providers, inadequate counselling resources, and inconsistent monitoring mechanisms hindered the effective provision of guidance services. These challenges created a gap between policy intentions and the actual development of students' assertiveness and life-planning skills.

In Tanzania, school-based guidance and counselling services had played an important role in supporting students' personal development and

academic progress. Students who actively participated in guidance and counselling sessions demonstrated improved self-esteem, enhanced academic performance, and clearer personal direction (Mushi & Malusu, 2017). Teachers and counselors served as role models by demonstrating assertive behaviours, encouraging students to express their ambitions, communicate their opinions confidently, and overcome negative peer pressure. Through these interactions, students developed important skills related to autonomy, self-awareness, decision-making, and effective communication, which were essential for achieving personal goals.

The findings from previous studies demonstrated that school-based guidance and counselling programs provided an important foundation for promoting self-assertiveness and personal goal achievement among secondary school students in Tanzania. Effective counselling services, life skills education, and collaboration between schools, families, and communities had the potential to empower students to overcome personal and academic challenges and successfully navigate their educational journey. Therefore, strengthening investment in counselling resources, professional training, and awareness creation remained essential for improving the effectiveness of school-based guidance programs and enabling students to

realize their full potential and contribute positively to society.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Review

Person-Centred Theory was the guiding theoretical framework for this study. Originally developed by Carl R. Rogers in the mid-20th century, this humanistic psychological theory emphasized that individuals possessed an innate capacity for growth, self-understanding, and self-actualization when provided with a supportive and facilitative. It describes how human development unfolded under supportive conditions, suggested that when students felt understood and accepted, they were more likely to express themselves confidently and engage effectively in their personal and academic growth. One of the major strengths of Person-Centred Theory was its emphasis on the whole person and the importance of supportive relational environments for development. The theory's focus on empathy, non-judgmental acceptance, and student autonomy was linked to positive psycho-social outcomes such as increased self-confidence, self-expression, and motivation (Casey et al., 2025; Cornelius White, 2025). Its humanistic orientation influenced educational practices worldwide by validating student-centred learning and encouraging educators to act as facilitators rather than authoritative directors of learning (Cornelius White, 2025; McLeod, 2025).

Despite its enduring influence, Person-Centred Theory also had notable weaknesses, the theory was considered overly optimistic regarding human nature. Rogers placed considerable emphasis on individuals' inherent tendency towards growth and constructive development. However, students' behaviour and development could also be influenced by external circumstances such as poverty, family problems, peer pressure, school environments, cultural expectations, and other social conditions. Therefore, providing a supportive counselling relationship alone might not be sufficient to overcome all barriers affecting students' development.

In the context of this study, Person-Centred Theory provided a powerful lens for understanding how school-based guidance and counselling program fostered students' self-assertiveness and goal-setting behaviour. By emphasizing the facilitative conditions of empathy, acceptance, and congruence, the theory explained how supportive guidance environments, where students were respected and encouraged to express their personal aspirations, enhanced confidence, decision-making, and agency (Cornelius White, 2025; Barida et al., 2022). In public secondary schools, guidance counselors and teachers who adopted person-centred attitudes helped students articulate personal goals, resist peer pressure, and develop assertive behaviour through reflection and self-directed

engagement. Therefore, the theory aligned directly with the study's focus on how the quality of guidance interactions influenced students' psycho-social outcomes, reinforcing the importance of relational and student-centred practices in educational guidance program.

2. Empirical Review of Literature

Globally, studies indicated that the availability of school-based guidance and counselling programs played a significant role in promoting students' self-confidence, assertiveness, and overall personal development. Research showed that when counselling services were well established and accessible, students developed better communication skills, emotional regulation, and decision-making abilities, which were key components of self-assertiveness. For instance, studies on assertiveness training within school guidance frameworks demonstrated improvements in students' confidence and ability to express their ideas clearly and independently (Munawwarah & Muslihati, 2024; OECD, 2021). These programs often included structured counselling sessions, life skills training, and career guidance activities that empowered students to actively participate in their academic and social environments. However, many global studies focused on well-resourced education systems, particularly in developed countries, which limited their applicability to developing

contexts such as Tanzania, where resource constraints and cultural differences affected programme implementation. Additionally, most studies emphasized outcomes such as self-confidence without critically examining the availability and accessibility of these services in under-resourced schools.

In Africa, empirical studies revealed that while guidance and counselling programs were recognized as essential components in schools, their availability and accessibility remained uneven across institutions. Research showed that where counselling services were available, they contributed to improved student behaviour, emotional stability, and self-esteem, which were closely linked to self-assertiveness. For example, studies indicated that guidance services helped students manage personal challenges, make informed decisions, and develop independence (Bobga, 2024; Abay et al., 2025). These programs were particularly important in addressing socio-economic challenges that affected students' psychological well-being and academic performance. Despite these positive findings, many African studies reported that guidance and counselling services were often inadequately implemented due to limited trained personnel, insufficient resources, and lack of institutional support. Furthermore, most studies relied heavily on quantitative data and failed to explore students' lived experiences, which limited a deeper understanding

of how the availability of counselling services translated into the actual development of self-assertiveness.

In Tanzania, empirical studies indicated that guidance and counselling programmes were present in many secondary schools, but their availability and adequacy varied significantly. Research showed that these programs contributed to students' self-efficacy, confidence, and academic performance when they were properly implemented. For example, studies in Moshi and other regions found that counselling strategies such as goal-setting, peer modelling, and feedback significantly enhanced students' self-efficacy and confidence (Mwiki et al., 2022). Additionally, counselling services were reported to improve students' behaviour, social interaction, and academic engagement, which were closely related to self-assertiveness (Lyimo et al., 2025). Despite their presence, many Tanzanian studies revealed that guidance and counselling services were not adequately available in terms of trained personnel, facilities, and structured programs. In many schools, teacher-counsellors lacked professional training, and counselling services were irregular or poorly organized. Furthermore, existing studies tended to focus on general outcomes such as discipline and academic performance rather than specifically examining self-assertiveness as a key outcome variable.

Empirical evidence from Dar es salaam showed that guidance and counselling programs were implemented in public secondary schools, with various approaches such as group counselling and student interaction strategies being used to support students' development. Studies indicated that these programs contributed to shaping students' behaviour, improving interpersonal relationships, and enhancing character development, which were closely linked to self-assertiveness. The use of group-based approaches, for example, enabled students to share experiences, build confidence, and develop communication skills within a supportive environment. However, despite these efforts, the availability of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools remained inconsistent, and their effectiveness was often limited by a lack of trained counselors, inadequate time allocation, and insufficient resources. Moreover, most studies conducted in this area focused on general behavioral outcomes and character building, with limited attention given to how the availability of these programs specifically influenced students' self-assertiveness and personal development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed research approach using a convergent parallel design, in which both quantitative and qualitative data were

collected simultaneously, analysed independently, and then merged at the interpretation stage to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The study was conducted in Kinondoni Municipality, the targeted population of this study comprised 11,272 participants, including 10,000 students, 1,200 teachers, 36 heads of schools, and 36 guidance counselors in public secondary schools within Kinondoni Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. From this population a sample size of 60 respondents including 50 students, 5 guidance and counselling teachers and 5 head of schools were from five selected public secondary school. Simple random sampling was used to select students and purposeful sampling was used to select Head of schools and Guidance Counselors. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Data analysis; quantitative data were collected through questionnaires were coded, entered and analyzed using descriptive statistics which included frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data were collected using thematic analysis to identify patterns, trends and emerging themes related to the implementation, effectiveness and challenges of school based-guidance and counselling programs. Validity was ensured through expert review and content analysis to strengthen the instruments, while reliability was confirmed via a pilot test, A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 was considered acceptable

indicating that the items within each construct were internally consistent. Triangulation of data sources enhanced reliability by comparing information obtained from different instruments, thereby minimizing potential bias (Denzin, 1978). The study strictly adhered to ethical principles to ensure protection, rights and dignity of participants, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning codes instead of names and securely storing the collected data

RESULT AND DISCUSION

Availability of school based-guidance and counselling programme

The study aimed to evaluate the availability of guidance and counselling programme in public secondary school. Students were asked to explain and rate the level of agreement which was determined by 1=Strongly Disagree(SD), 2=Disagree(D), 3=Neutral(N), 4=Agree(A) and 5=Strongly Agree(SA) against the statements given in Likert scale. The findings obtained from the questionnaires indicate that, (A=56%, SA=38%) acknowledged the availability of guidance and counselling programme in their respective schools, (A=60%, SA=20%) students reported that their schools had organized counselling services coordinated by designated teachers, (A=40%, SA=24%) responded guidance and counselling sessions are conducted regularly and help them to understand their career opportunities and abilities,

(A=46%, SA=54%) acknowledged they can confidently express their opinion in classroom, (A=50%, SA=50%) reported that they can resist negative peer pressure and make their own decisions, set clear academic goal and clear plans for their future career. The general perception among students was that counselling services were available and beneficial. However, (D=20%) pointed out that counselling services were not always easily accessible because of limited counselling time, inadequate facilities, and the shortage of trained counsellor, (D=30%, N=6%) responded guidance and counselling sessions were not conducted regularly rather than occasionally. The responses from all five participating schools were combined and analyzed to establish the overall pattern of responses regarding the availability of counselling services and students' self-assertiveness as presented in table 1

Table 1.
Students' Responses on the
Availability of Guidance and
Counselling Programmes (N = 50)

Statement	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)
My school provides organized guidance and counselling services.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (6.0)	28 (56.0)	19 (38.0)
I can easily access counselling services whenever I need help.	0 (0.0)	10 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	30 (60.0)	10 (20.0)
Guidance and counselling sessions are conducted regularly.	0 (0.0)	15 (30.0)	3 (6.0)	20 (40.0)	12 (24.0)
I am confident in expressing my opinions in class.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	23 (46.0)	27 (54.0)
I can resist negative peer pressure and make my own decisions.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	25 (50.0)	25 (50.0)

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 1. Indicates that guidance and counselling programmes were generally available in the participating schools, although some differences were observed in students' access to and experiences of the services. The findings also show generally positive levels of self-assertiveness among the students, particularly in relation to expressing opinions and resisting negative peer pressure. The results therefore indicate that while the existence of guidance and counselling programmes was widely acknowledged, issues related to accessibility and regularity remained important areas requiring attention.

Provision of Organized Guidance and Counselling Services

The first item examined whether schools provided organized guidance and counselling services. The findings show that 47 out of 50 students (94.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that their schools provided organized guidance and counselling services. Specifically, 28 students (56.0%) agreed, while 19 students (38.0%) strongly agreed. Only 3 students (6.0%) were neutral, and none disagreed with the statement. These findings indicate that organized guidance and counselling services were widely established across the five participating schools. The high level of agreement suggests that most students were aware of the existence of formal counselling services within their schools. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that the major

concern was not the complete absence of counselling programmes, but rather the extent to which such programmes were accessible, adequately resourced, and regularly implemented.

The finding is consistent with Gysbers and Henderson (2012), who emphasized that comprehensive school counselling programmes provide structured support for students' academic, personal-social, and career development. Similarly, Sink (2005) argued that effective school counselling programmes should be systematically organized and integrated into the broader educational process rather than being provided only when students experience serious problems. In the context of the present study, the high proportion of students reporting the existence of organized counselling services suggests that the participating schools had established a structure through which students could receive academic, personal, social, behavioural, and career-related support.

The finding can also be related to Rogers' Person-Centred Theory (1951), which emphasizes the importance of a supportive and accepting environment in facilitating self-understanding, confidence, and personal growth. In this study, the availability of organized counselling services may provide students with opportunities to discuss personal and academic challenges, seek guidance, express their views, and develop confidence in making decisions. However, the finding differs

from the observations of Mapfumo and Chitsiko (2013), who reported challenges in the provision of effective guidance and counselling services in some educational settings, particularly where schools experienced inadequate resources, insufficiently trained personnel, and limited institutional support. The difference may be associated with variations in school resources, staffing, administrative support, and the extent to which counselling programmes are formally integrated into school activities.

Access to Counselling Services

The second item examined whether students could easily access counselling services whenever they needed assistance. The findings show that 40 out of 50 students (80.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that they could easily access counselling services when they needed help. Among them, 30 students (60.0%) agreed, while 10 students (20.0%) strongly agreed. However, 10 students (20.0%) disagreed, indicating that access to counselling services was not equally experienced by all students. The finding suggests that the existence of a counselling programme did not necessarily guarantee equal accessibility for every student. The 20.0% who disagreed may indicate challenges such as limited counselling time, inadequate counselling facilities, insufficient counselling materials, or competing responsibilities assigned to teacher-counsellors. Consequently,

schools may have established counselling programmes, but students may still experience difficulties in obtaining counselling support at the time they need it. This finding is consistent with Gysbers and Henderson (2012), who emphasized that the effectiveness of school counselling programmes depends not only on their establishment but also on students' ability to access appropriate services when required. The finding also supports the person-centred perspective of Rogers (1951), which emphasizes the importance of creating an environment in which individuals feel accepted, understood, and able to seek support freely. Therefore, improving the accessibility of counselling services may help ensure that the established programmes respond effectively to students' academic, personal, social, and career-related needs.

Conduction of Guidance and Counselling Sessions

The third item assessed whether guidance and counselling sessions were conducted regularly. The findings indicate that 32 out of 50 students (64.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that guidance and counselling sessions were conducted regularly. Specifically, 20 students (40.0%) agreed, while 12 students (24.0%) strongly agreed. In contrast, 15 students (30.0%) disagreed, while 3 students (6.0%) were neutral. These findings suggest that although guidance and counselling programmes

were available, their implementation was not equally regular from the perspective of all students. The relatively high proportion of students who disagreed indicates that some students may not have received counselling sessions consistently. This may be related to limited time allocated for counselling, competing school activities, inadequate facilities, or the shortage of trained counselling personnel. The finding therefore highlights an important distinction between programme availability and programme implementation. A school may have a formal guidance and counselling programme, but the programme may not achieve its intended purpose if counselling sessions are not conducted regularly. Regular counselling provides students with continuous opportunities to seek support, discuss academic and personal challenges, develop decision-making skills, and strengthen confidence.

Confidence of Students in Expressing Opinions

The fourth item examined students' confidence in expressing their opinions in class. The findings show that all 50 students (100.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident in expressing their opinions in class. Specifically, 23 students (46.0%) agreed, while 27 students (54.0%) strongly agreed. No student disagreed or remained neutral. The finding demonstrates a high reported

level of confidence among the students in expressing their opinions in classroom settings. This aspect is relevant to self-assertiveness because the ability to communicate one's views confidently is an important component of students' personal and social development. Guidance and counselling programmes may contribute to such development by providing students with opportunities to develop self-awareness, communication skills, confidence, and appropriate decision-making abilities. However, the findings should be interpreted as students' reported perceptions of their confidence rather than as direct evidence that counselling programmes caused the observed level of self-assertiveness. Other factors within the school and home environments may also contribute to students' confidence in expressing their opinions.

Resistance to Negative Peer Pressure in Making Decisions

The fifth item examined whether students could resist negative peer pressure and make their own decisions. The findings show that all 50 students (100.0%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Specifically, 25 students (50.0%) agreed, while 25 students (50.0%) strongly agreed. No student disagreed or remained neutral. The findings indicate a generally high reported level of students' ability to resist negative peer pressure and make independent decisions. This suggests

that the students perceived themselves as having the confidence to make decisions without being excessively influenced by negative peer behaviours. Such abilities are relevant to the personal-social development dimension of guidance and counselling because counselling can provide students with opportunities to discuss peer relationships, personal challenges, values, responsible decision-making, and strategies for dealing with social pressure. Nevertheless, as with the previous item, the finding reflects students' self-reported perceptions and should not be interpreted as establishing a direct causal relationship between counselling services and students' ability to resist peer pressure. The quantitative findings were further supported and explained by information obtained from Heads of Schools and Guidance and Counselling Teachers. The finding is supported by Gysbers and Henderson (2012), who noted that the effectiveness of school counselling programs depends not only on their existence but also on students' ability to access appropriate services when required. The finding also supports the person-centred perspective of Rogers (1951), which emphasizes the importance of creating an environment in which individuals feel accepted, understood, and able to seek support freely.

All Heads of Schools and Guidance and Counselling Teachers confirmed that their schools had established guidance and counselling

programs coordinated by designated teacher counselors. These programs mainly focused on academic guidance, personal and social counselling, behavioral counselling, and career guidance. However, respondents emphasized that although the programs existed, their implementation varied depending on available resources and personnel.

"Our school has a formal guidance and counselling programme by a designated teacher. We provide academic, social, personal, and career counselling to students. However, the programme is constrained by limited facilities and insufficient counselling materials." (GCT-C, July, 2026).

This implies that, the existence of a formal counselling programme does not necessarily guarantee effective service delivery. Although the school had established counselling services, limited facilities and materials constrained the ability of the counsellor to provide services effectively. This qualitative finding helps explain why 20% of students in the quantitative results reported difficulties in accessing counselling services and 30% of students reported irregularity in counselling sessions.

"Guidance and counselling services are available in our school, and students receive support whenever they encounter academic or personal challenges. Nevertheless, inadequate counselling facilities and shortage of trained counselors

reduce the effectiveness of the programme." (HOS-E, July, 2026)

This shows that school administrators recognized the value of guidance and counselling services but also identified institutional limitations affecting their effectiveness. The response further supports the quantitative findings, particularly the 20% of students who reported difficulties accessing counselling services and the 30% who disagreed that counselling sessions were conducted regularly.

The quantitative and qualitative findings generally complement each other. The questionnaire results demonstrated that most students (95%) agreed that organized guidance and counselling services were available in their schools. This finding was supported by Heads of Schools and Guidance and Counselling Teachers, who confirmed the existence of formal counselling programs. However, the qualitative findings provided additional explanation by showing that limited facilities, counselling materials and trained personnel affected accessibility and regularity. Therefore, the findings suggest that the major issue was not necessarily the absence of guidance and counselling programs, but rather differences in their accessibility, regularity, and availability of resources. This distinction is important because the presence of a programme alone may not be sufficient to produce the desired outcomes in students' self-

assertiveness. Overall, the findings indicate that school-based guidance and counselling programs were available across the five participating schools and were perceived positively by most students. At the same time, strengthening counselling personnel, facilities, materials, and regular scheduling would likely improve students' access to these services and enhance their contribution to students' self-assertiveness and personal development.

The Influence of School-Based Guidance and Counselling Programs on Students' Self-Assertiveness

The second aspect of objective one explored the influence of school-based guidance and counselling programs on students' self-assertiveness. Through open ended question students were asked to mention and briefly explain how school-based guidance and counselling programs influence students' self-assertiveness. The findings are presented in table 2

Table 2. The Influence of School-Based Guidance and Counselling Programs on Students' Self-Assertiveness (N=50)

S/N	Items (Influence)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Increased confidence in expressing opinions and ideas	40	80.0
2	Improved ability to make independent decisions	38	76.0

3	Increased ability to resist negative peer pressure	35	70.0
4	Improved self-awareness and understanding of personal abilities	33	66.0
5	Improved communication and interpersonal skills	30	60.0
6	Increased ability to identify and pursue personal goals	28	56.0
7	Improved ability to seek help and express personal challenges	25	50.0

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 2 indicates that school-based guidance and counselling programs had a generally positive influence on students' self-assertiveness. The most frequently reported influence was increased confidence in expressing opinions and ideas, reported by 40 students (80.0%). This was followed by improved ability to make independent decisions, reported by 38 students (76.0%), and increased ability to resist negative peer pressure, reported by 35 students (70.0%). Furthermore, 33 students (66.0%) indicated that counselling improved their self-awareness and understanding of their personal abilities, while 30 students (60.0%) reported improved communication and interpersonal skills. In addition, 28 students (56.0%) indicated that guidance and counselling helped them identify and pursue personal goals, while 25 students (50.0%) reported that counselling improved their ability to seek help and express personal challenges.

Increased Confidence in Expressing Opinions and Ideas

The finding that 80.0% of students reported increased confidence in expressing their opinions and ideas suggests that guidance and counselling played an important role in strengthening students' ability to communicate their thoughts in school and social environments. Counselling provides students with opportunities to discuss their concerns, feelings, aspirations, and challenges in a supportive environment. Through such interactions, students may gradually develop confidence in expressing themselves without excessive fear of criticism or rejection. This finding is particularly important because self-assertiveness involves the ability to communicate one's views, needs and feelings appropriately while respecting others. The finding also corresponds with the Person-Centred Theory of Carl Rogers, which emphasizes the importance of empathy, acceptance, and genuine interpersonal relationships in facilitating personal growth. When students experience an environment in which they feel accepted and respected, they are more likely to develop a positive self-concept and express themselves confidently. Therefore, counselling environments that encourage students to communicate openly may contribute to the development of self-assertive behaviors.

Improved Ability to Make Independent Decisions

The second most frequently reported influence was improved independent decision-making, reported by 76.0% of the students. This finding indicates that guidance and counselling programs may help students develop the capacity to assess situations, consider alternatives, and make decisions based on their own understanding rather than simply following the decisions of others. This is particularly relevant during adolescence, when students increasingly encounter choices related to friendships, academic subjects, behaviour, future careers and personal relationships. The finding is consistent with the principles of Person-Centred Theory, which view individuals as capable of understanding themselves and making constructive choices when provided with an appropriate supportive environment. In the context of school counselling, students are not simply given solutions to their problems; rather, they are encouraged to explore their experiences, identify alternatives, and make informed decisions. This approach may strengthen students' sense of responsibility and personal autonomy.

Increased Ability to Resist Negative Peer Pressure

Similarly, 70.0% of students reported that guidance and counselling increased their ability to resist negative peer pressure. This finding suggests

that counselling services contributed to students' capacity to maintain their own values and decisions even when confronted with pressure from peers. Adolescents may face peer influence in areas such as academic behaviour, school discipline, relationships, substance use, absenteeism and other social activities. Counselling can assist students in understanding the consequences of their choices and developing confidence to make independent decisions.

Improved Self-Awareness and Understanding of Personal Abilities

The finding that 66.0% of students reported improved self-awareness and understanding of their personal abilities further demonstrates the contribution of counselling to students' personal development. Self-awareness enables students to understand their strengths, weaknesses, interests, values, emotions, and aspirations. This understanding can help students make more realistic decisions concerning their academic and personal lives. From the perspective of Person-Centred Theory, increased self-awareness is an important component of personal growth because individuals are encouraged to understand their own experiences and develop a more realistic and positive perception of themselves.

Improved Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Furthermore, 60.0% of students reported improved communication and interpersonal skills. This finding indicates that counselling may have helped students communicate more effectively with teachers, fellow students, parents, and other members of the school community. Effective communication is closely associated with assertiveness because students who can communicate clearly are more likely to express their needs, opinions, and concerns appropriately. Counselling sessions, particularly group guidance and individual counselling, may provide students with opportunities to practise listening, expressing feelings, responding to others, and managing interpersonal disagreements.

Increased Ability to Identify and Pursue Personal Goals

The findings also showed that 56.0% of students indicated that guidance and counselling helped them identify and pursue personal goals. This suggests that counselling was not limited to addressing students' immediate emotional or behavioral challenges but also contributed to their future orientation. Through counselling, students may be encouraged to identify their interests, abilities, academic aspirations, and career objectives. Such activities can strengthen students' motivation and commitment to achieving their goals.

Improved Ability to Seek Help and Express Personal Challenges

Finally, 50.0% of students reported that counselling improved their ability to seek help and express personal challenges. Although this was the least frequently reported influence, the finding remains important. Students who are able to recognize when they need assistance and seek appropriate support demonstrate an important aspect of healthy self-assertiveness. Rather than remaining silent when facing difficulties, students may become more willing to communicate their problems to teachers, counselors, parents, or other trusted individuals.

The qualitative findings from the Guidance and Counselling Teachers and Heads of Schools supported the students' responses. *"Guidance and counselling has improved students' confidence by helping them understand themselves better, strengthened their decision-making in subject and career choices and increased their self-assertiveness in expressing opinions and making independent decisions."* (GCT-C July, 2026). This response provides direct evidence that teachers perceived counselling as contributing to students' confidence and independence. It also corresponds with the quantitative finding that 80.0% of students reported increased confidence in expressing their opinions, while 76.0% reported improved independent decision-making. *"There is improved confidence, better decision-making and clear goal-setting among students. Many students*

now make informed choices about subjects and careers and show greater focus on their academic goals." (HOS-E July, 2026) The response indicates that the influence of counselling extended beyond students' ability to express themselves. It also contributed to decision-making and goal-setting behaviour. This finding suggests that self-assertiveness may function as an important foundation for students' broader academic and personal development. The qualitative findings further indicated that counselling helped some students become more willing to communicate their personal difficulties. Guidance and Counselling Teachers explained that students were identified through self-referrals, teacher referrals, and observations.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings therefore demonstrates a consistent positive influence of school-based guidance and counselling programs on students' self-assertiveness. The quantitative findings showed that the majority of students reported improvements in confidence, decision-making, resistance to peer pressure, self-awareness, communication, goal identification, and help-seeking behaviour. The qualitative findings from teachers and Heads of Schools reinforced these results by describing observable improvements in students' confidence, independence, decision-making, and goal-setting. These findings are consistent with the broader argument that effective school counselling

programs support students' academic, personal-social, and career development. Gysbers and Henderson (2012) emphasized that comprehensive counselling programs can address students' developmental needs by providing systematic support throughout their educational experience. Similarly, Rogers' Person-Centred Theory provides an appropriate explanation for the findings because the theory emphasizes that individuals develop more fully when they experience empathy, acceptance, respect, and opportunities for self-exploration. When counselling environments provide these conditions, students may become more confident in understanding themselves and making independent choices.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that guidance and counselling services are generally present in all sampled public secondary schools, but their effectiveness differs depending on the level of organization, availability of resources, and institutional support. Although schools have established counselling structures, they are generally characterized by shortages of trained counselors, limited time allocation, inadequate facilities, and insufficient materials. These limitations reduce the overall quality and consistency of service delivery. The study further concludes that school-

based guidance and counselling programs have a positive but moderate influence on students' self-assertiveness. Students who participate in counselling activities tend to show improved confidence, better communication skills, and increased ability to resist negative peer pressure. However, these outcomes are not fully maximized due to inconsistencies in counselling provision and lack of supportive environments such as privacy and professional counselling spaces.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), in collaboration with education authorities, should strengthen the provision of trained and qualified guidance and counselling personnel in public secondary schools. The findings indicated that although guidance and counselling programs were available in the selected schools, their effectiveness was constrained by shortages of trained counselors and the extensive teaching responsibilities assigned to teacher-counselors. Therefore, more professional counselors should be recruited and deployed to schools, while teachers assigned counselling responsibilities should receive regular professional development in counselling skills, career guidance, adolescent development, communication, and goal-setting interventions. School administrations should allocate adequate and regular

time for guidance and counselling activities within the school timetable. The findings showed that limited counselling time affected students' access to services and the regularity of counselling sessions. Schools should establish clearly scheduled counselling periods for individual counselling, group guidance, career guidance, and follow-up sessions. Counselling should not be treated only as an emergency service for students experiencing problems but should be implemented as a continuous developmental programme.

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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