

**PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' GUIDANCE ON STUDENTS'
CHOICE OF ADVANCED LEVEL SUBJECT COMBINATIONS IN PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MBEYA DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that they have read and recommends for the acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania a dissertation entitled: ***Perceived Influence of Teachers' Guidance on Student's Choice of Advanced Level Subject Combinations in Public Secondary Schools in Mbeya District Council*** in a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education in Administration, Planning and Policy Studies (MED-APPS)

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DECLARATION

I, **Aliko Mbuba**, declare that, the work presented in this dissertation is original. It has never been presented to any other University or Institution. Where other people's works have been used, references have been provided. It is in this regard that I declare this work is originally mine. It is hereby presented in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Masters of Education in Administration, Planning, and Policy Studies (MED-APPS) of the Open University of Tanzania

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Signature

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Date

DEDICATION

This work is wholeheartedly dedicated to my supervisors, Dr. Winifrida Malingumu and Dr. Edgar Nderego, for their unwavering guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this academic journey. I also dedicate it to my beloved late parents, Belina M. Kibona and Andulile Mbuba, who endured countless challenges and sacrifices to ensure I had a smooth path to education. Their love, perseverance, and selflessness despite limited means laid the foundation for my success. Though they are no longer with me, their legacy continues to inspire every step I take. May this work be a tribute to their enduring spirit and love.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to investigate the perceived influence of teachers' guidance on students' choice of advanced level subject combinations in public secondary schools in Mbeya district council. Specifically, the study attempted to accomplish three research objectives: to examine the perceived role of teachers' guidance in influencing students' choice of advanced level subject combinations, analyse the teachers' views on students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when selecting advanced level subject combinations and identify the challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the selection of subject combinations. The study was guided by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). The study was guided by interpretivism paradigm which led to adoption of qualitative approach. Moreover, a multiple case study design was selected as research design. Focus group discussion and interview were employed as data collection methods. Data were obtained from teachers and heads of schools from public secondary schools. Obtained data were thematically analyzed. Additionally, all ethical issues were observed and considered in this study. The findings of the study showed that teachers in public secondary schools have a very critical role of providing guidance to the students as the way to influence students' choice of advanced level subject combinations.

Key words: Teachers, guidance, Advanced level and subject combination

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LIST OF ACRONYMY

OUT	Open University of Tanzania
RAS	Regional Administrative Secretary
DAS	District Administrative Secretary
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
USA	United States of America
DC	District Council

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

This study examined the Perceived Role of Teachers' Guidance in Influencing Students' Selection of Advanced Level Subject Combinations in Public Secondary schools in Mbeya District council. This chapter presents the background to the problem, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, scope and delimitation of the study, and operational definition of the key terms.

1.2 Background to the Problem

The selection of Advanced Level (A-Level) subject combinations is crucial for students, as it significantly influences their future academic and career development. Research indicates that students are increasingly opting for a narrower range of subjects, often focusing solely on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (Makoye, 2022). Therefore, it is essential for students to receive comprehensive career guidance to make informed subject choices that align with their interests and future goals. Educational reforms should aim to provide a balanced curriculum that encourages a diverse range of subject combinations and ensuring that students are well-prepared for various career paths. Despite such importance still the problem happens.

The problem of selecting advanced level subject combinations continues to challenge secondary school students in the USA, Scotland, and China, largely due to systemic limitations and lack of proper support. In the United States, students often face too

many options with too little guidance when selecting combinations (Kreamer et al., 2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), 25% of students could not enroll in advanced courses due to failure in selecting the best combination for higher studies which limits their academic and career opportunities. In Scotland, Hipkins and Vaughan (2019) found that most of the students failed to select combinations when they completed secondary education. This failure is resulted to the lack of awareness among students when selecting advanced level subject combinations. Additionally, in China 45% of the students were unable to select proper combinations to pursue the higher education (Wong & Yuen, 2019). This shows that students' selection of advanced level combinations is also a big challenge in a country.

Africa has suffered with the same problem, for instance in Nigeria, Abubakar (2019) noted that students are highly confused about which combination to study when they enter the advanced level, where there is a specialization in different combinations from different subjects. In Rwanda, study by Itangishatse et al (2021) revealed that students from secondary schools were not well informed about how to select advanced level combinations once they complete secondary education. This shows that students' selection of advanced level subjects is a problem in a country among students. Similarly, study conducted by Banda (2016) in Zambia demonstrated that student selection of advanced level combinations is surprisingly as most of the students failed to select proper combination to pursue in their studies in advanced level.

In Tanzania, Chilewa and Osaki (2022) in Mwanga district have shown that students' selection of advanced level combinations is relatively low in most of the public secondary schools in Mwanga district as the students are lacking proper guidance on

how to select advanced level combination. Additionally, Okeke (2020) outlined that most of the students in Tanzania public secondary lack proper guidance to select advanced level combinations because most of them are selecting inappropriate combinations. This shows that the problem of students' selection of advanced level combinations is disvaluing the education quality.

Students in Mbeya District council face significant challenges in selecting advanced level subject combinations due to inadequate resources and limited guidance. Many students are lacking proper guidance on how to select the advanced level combinations after terminating their ordinary level studies. As a result, subject selection is often based on availability rather than preference leading to poor engagement and academic underperformance. The lack of structured career counseling further worsens the situation (Mligo, 2016).

The problem of students' selection of advanced level subject combinations can be significantly mitigated through effective teacher guidance. Teachers play a crucial role in helping students understand their strengths, interests, and career goals which are essential factors in making informed subject choices (Mligo, 2016). With proper support, students can explore the relevance of each subject to various career paths leading to better alignment between their academic choices and future aspirations. Regular academic advising sessions, personalized feedback and open discussions with knowledgeable teachers can empower students to make confident and well-informed decisions (Yara & Wanjohi, 2011).

Teachers' guidance significantly influences students' selection of Advanced Level (A-Level) subject combinations especially in contexts where students have limited

exposure to career planning resources. In Tanzania, many students face challenges when selecting A-Level subject combinations due to a lack of career information, peer pressure and parental influence often resulting in misaligned choices that do not support their long-term goals (Ikumbio, 2023). Teachers as daily mentors, are well-positioned to offer individualized guidance based on students' academic strengths, interests, and career aspirations. Effective teacher guidance helps students understand the relevance of subject combinations to future academic and career opportunities. For example, when teachers explain how certain subjects relate to university courses or job markets, students are better equipped to make informed decisions. According to Josephat et al, (2024), students who received personalized career counseling from teachers showed greater clarity and confidence in selecting science subjects, particularly in rural schools where professional career advisors are scarce.

Moreover, teachers can organize structured guidance activities such as debates, career days and subject-specific mentoring sessions. These engagements not only expose students to real-world applications of subjects but also allow them to interact with professionals and alumni who can share insights on various career paths (Ikumbio, 2023). By fostering open communication and supporting students in reflecting on their abilities and ambitions, teachers empower learners to choose combinations that match both their potential and market needs.

Several recent studies have explored the influence of teacher guidance on various student outcomes. For instance, research by Alrajhi (2024) demonstrated that teacher characteristics and competencies significantly affect students' academic achievement highlighting the importance of teacher-student relationships. Similarly, a study in

Lasbela District, Pakistan, found that positive teacher-student relationships enhance students' academic performance (Shakir & Kiazai, 2023). In the context of Tanzania, Massawe et al. (2023) revealed that guidance services in schools play a crucial role in helping students choose appropriate subjects and aligning their choices with future careers. Furthermore, an analysis by Darmawan et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of academic guidance in improving student achievement suggesting that teacher support is vital for student success.

Despite these insights, a gap remains in the literature regarding the specific impact of teacher guidance on students' selection of Advanced Level (A-Level) subject combinations in Tanzania. While existing studies acknowledge the role of teacher guidance in broader academic outcomes, few have focused on how this guidance influences subject choice at the A-Level stage. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the specific influence of teacher guidance on students' selection of A-Level subject combinations in Tanzanian secondary schools in Mbeya district council. By addressing this gap, the research will contribute valuable insights into how targeted teacher support can enhance students' decision-making processes regarding their academic paths.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In an ideal educational setting, students should be supported in selecting Advanced Level (A-Level) subject combinations that align with their interests, abilities, and future career goals. Teachers, as key educational stakeholders, are expected to provide informed and personalized guidance to help students make these critical academic decisions. However, in many Tanzanian public secondary schools, this is not the case.

Students frequently encounter limited subject offerings, inadequate career counseling services and insufficient teacher involvement in their decision-making process (The Citizen, 2023).

As a result, subject choices are often made based on examination performance, peer influence or administrative decisions rather than informed personal interest (Swai, 2022). According to the Mbeya District Council Education Report (2022), over 65% of students advancing to advanced level education struggle with selecting appropriate subject combinations.

This challenge has contributed to a dropout rate of approximately 28% among A-Level students in the district and a failure rate of over 35% in national examinations. If the issue remains unaddressed, it will continue to hinder students' academic progression, reduce access to higher education, and limit employment opportunities. Ultimately, this affects not only individual students but also the education system and workforce development, leading to a shortage of skilled graduates in critical sectors.

Existing research highlights various factors influencing subject combination choices including parental influence, peer pressure and school resources (Swai, 2022). However, there is limited empirical evidence on how teachers' guidance specifically affects students' A-Level subject combination decisions especially in public secondary schools' settings (Makunja, 2022). Many students report minimal engagement with teachers during the selection process suggesting a critical gap in practice and research (Swai, 2022). Furthermore, despite some studies acknowledging the role of teacher support, there is still little exploration of the precise ways teachers influences students' career paths and subject choices (Mgonja & Mfaume, 2021). This study aimed to

explore the influence of teachers' guidance on students' choice of A-Level subject combinations in public secondary schools in Mbeya District Council. The findings are expected to inform educational policy and improve guidance practices to support better student decision-making.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the perceived influence of teachers' guidance on students' choice of advanced level subject combinations in public secondary schools in Mbeya district council

1.4.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by three specific objectives; namely

- i. To examine the perceived role of teachers' guidance in influencing students' choice of advanced level subject combinations
- ii. To analyse teachers' views on students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when selecting advanced level subject combinations
- iii. To identify the challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combination selection.

1.5 Research Questions

This study was guided with three research questions;

- i. How does teacher guidance influence students' choice of Advanced Level subject combinations?

- ii. What are the teachers' views on students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when selecting Advanced Level subject combinations?
- iii. What challenges do teachers face in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combination selection?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study on the perceived influence of teachers' guidance on students' choice of Advanced Level (A-Level) subject combinations in public secondary schools held considerable significance for various educational stakeholders. First, it contributed to the existing body of knowledge by exploring the specific role teachers played in shaping academic trajectories at a critical stage in students' education.

For educational stakeholders such as school administrators, counselors, and curriculum developers, the findings offered practical insights into how teacher-student relationships could be leveraged to guide students more effectively toward subject combinations that aligned with their strengths, interests, and career goals. Understanding the extent of teachers' influence helped schools design improved guidance programs and teacher training workshops aimed at enhancing academic counseling.

Policy makers also benefited from the study's findings by gaining evidence-based recommendations for integrating structured career guidance frameworks within the secondary education system. Since teachers' influence was shown to be significant, the study supported the justification for developing national policies or school-level protocols to formalize the guidance process ensuring that all students received equitable and informed support.

Finally, the study opened avenues for further research into related areas such as the long-term impact of subject choice on career success or comparative studies between public and private institutions. By building a foundation in this under-researched area, it encouraged future scholars to explore broader educational guidance dynamics and the systemic factors that shaped student outcomes. Ultimately, the study aimed to support a more student-centered approach to academic decision-making in secondary education.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study was confined itself on public secondary schools found in Mbeya district council basing on public secondary schools. Teachers, head of schools and District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO) were involved in this study. Mbeya District Council has been chosen due to its unique blend of urban and rural schools which allows for a comprehensive examination of how teachers' guidance influences subject selection in diverse educational settings. Mbeya district council also has distinct socio-economic and cultural dynamics that may affect students' decision-making processes. Studying this study within Mbeya district council provides an opportunity to gather council - specific data contributing to a more nuanced understanding of guidance practices in education system.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

During this study, the researcher encountered two main limitations. First, lack of cooperation from some teachers delayed data collection, as a few were reluctant to participate in interviews and discussions. This was addressed by building rapport, clearly explaining the study's purpose, and ensuring confidentiality to encourage their

involvement. Second, time constraints affected the scheduling of data collection activities due to school timetables and limited access to participants. To overcome this, the researcher developed a flexible schedule and prioritized data collection during free periods and after school hours. These strategies helped ensure the completion of the study within the required timeframe.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

This study was delimited to public secondary schools in Tanzania, focusing specifically on Advanced Level students and their subject combination choices. It concentrated on the role of teachers' guidance, excluding other sources of influence such as parents, peers, or media. The study employed a qualitative approach, relying on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

1.10 Organizational of the Study

This report has five chapters. Chapter one regards the introduction and the background of the study. Other dimensions of the chapter are the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of study, scope and delimitation of the study and the operational definition of the key terms. Chapter two which is a literature review is composed of a definition of key terms, theoretical literature review, empirical literature review, research gap and conceptual framework. Chapter three presented research methodology composed of research paradigm, research approach, research design, area of study, population, sampling size, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis, validity and reliability and ethical considerations. Chapter four is concerned with research findings and discussion. Finally, chapter five comprises summary of study, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the literature review concerning the perceived influence of teachers' guidance on students' selection of advanced level subject combinations in public secondary schools within Mbeya District Council. Specifically, the chapter comprised the theoretical literature review, empirical literature review, research gap, and a summary of the chapter. These components provided a foundation for understanding the key concepts, previous research findings, and the existing gap that this study aimed to address.

2.2 Operational Definition of the Key Terms

Teachers: Teachers are professional educators in secondary schools responsible for delivering subject content, mentoring students, and providing academic guidance. Their role extends beyond instruction to include influencing students' academic and career decisions through advice, motivation and classroom interactions.

Guidance: Guidance refers to the support and advice given to students to help them make informed academic, personal and career decisions. In this study, it specifically focuses on the assistance teachers provide regarding students' selection of suitable A-Level subject combinations.

Advanced Level: Advanced Level, often referred to as A-Level, is a stage of education typically undertaken after ordinary secondary education. It involves specialized subject study that prepares students for tertiary education or professional careers, requiring thoughtful subject combination choices aligned with future goals.

Subject Combination: Subject combination refers to the specific set of subjects a student selects to study at the Advanced Level. These combinations are usually grouped based on academic disciplines like sciences, arts, or business, and significantly influence a student's higher education and career pathways.

Public Secondary Schools: Public secondary schools are government-funded educational institutions that provide lower and upper-level secondary education to students. These schools follow national curricula and are accessible to the general public, often serving diverse student populations with varying educational and career aspirations.

2.3 Theories Which Relate in this Study

This study adopted Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to establish the critical foundation on examining the perceived influence of teachers' guidance on students' selection of advanced level subject combinations in public secondary schools.

2.3.1 Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), assumes that career development is shaped by the interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. At its core, SCCT emphasizes three primary constructs: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and personal goals. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks or succeed in particular academic domains which directly influences the kinds of subjects and career paths they feel confident pursuing (Lent et al., 2017). Outcome expectations refer to beliefs about the likely consequences of performing particular behaviors such as whether selecting certain A-Level subjects will lead to desirable academic or career

outcomes. These expectations are shaped by past experiences, social models and verbal encouragement especially from influential figures like teachers. Furthermore, SCCT assumes that environmental supports and barriers such as teacher guidance, school resources and cultural context can significantly influence students' educational decisions (Lent, 2020).

In the context of this study, teachers act as social agents whose guidance may affect students' confidence in their academic choices and their expectations of future success, thereby influencing their selection of subject combinations. This theory is therefore highly applicable in examining how teacher-student interactions shape academic and career decision-making processes in secondary education.

While Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) offers a valuable framework for understanding academic and career choices, it is not without limitations. One key weakness is its limited attention to unconscious or emotional influences on decision-making such as anxiety, identity struggles or cultural expectations which may significantly affect students' subject choices but fall outside the theory's primary focus on cognitive processes (Brown & Lent, 2019).

Additionally, SCCT heavily relies on measurable constructs like self-efficacy and outcome expectations which may oversimplify the complexity of students' experiences especially in diverse or under-resourced educational contexts (Swanson & Fouad, 2020). However, despite these limitations, the theory's strengths particularly its emphasis on the dynamic interaction between personal, behavioral and environmental factors make it a robust tool for exploring how teacher guidance shapes student decisions. Its adaptability to different contexts and populations enhances its

practical application in school settings. The theory's structured framework helps educators identify where interventions such as enhanced guidance programs or teacher training, can be most effective. Therefore, while SCCT may not capture every nuance of student decision-making, its strengths in offering a clear evidence-based model for academic and career development significantly outweigh its limitations making it highly suitable for this study's objectives (Lent et al., 2017).

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was highly applicable in this study as it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how students make decisions regarding their A-Level subject combinations. According to SCCT, individuals' career and academic choices are influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and the support they receive from their environment (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' academic self-efficacy and guiding their expectations of success in various subjects. Their encouragement and feedback can either boost or diminish a student's confidence in specific academic areas thus influencing their subject choices (Lent et al., 2017). Additionally, the theory acknowledges the importance of contextual factors such as teacher support, as vital in either facilitating or hindering students' academic paths (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). In this way, SCCT effectively explains how teacher guidance serves as both a motivational and directional force in students' subject selection decisions.

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

2.4.1 The Role of Perceived Teachers' Guidance in Influencing Students' Choice of Advanced Level Subject Combinations

Aslam et al (2021) conducted a study on significance of guidance and counseling for enhancing the academic performance of secondary students in Karachi, Pakistan. The study employed a quantitative method approach. A stratified sampling design was used to draw the sample size of 1000 teachers. The research instrument was close-ended questionnaires for teachers. Data collected and analyzed descriptively with the aid the help of SPSS in testing the hypothesis.

The study revealed that guidance and counseling were of a great significance in schools. Aslam et al. (2021) conducted a study on the significance of guidance and counseling in enhancing academic performance among secondary school students in Karachi, Pakistan, using a quantitative method approach. While the study effectively measured the impact of guidance services on academic performance.

It lacked qualitative depth and did not explore the specific role of teacher guidance in subject selection. This presents a methodological gap. The current study addressed this by employing a qualitative approach to gain richer, more contextualized insights into how teacher guidance influences students' choices of Advanced Level subject combinations.

Abubakari (2019) conducted a study career guidance service in public senior secondary in Kano in Nigeria. The study employed a mixed methods approach. The sample size of 387 respondents from the 21 secondary schools. Simple random and purposive sampling was used to get the sample. Data were collected through

questionnaires and analyzed by using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics like t-tests. The study found out the school counselor played a great role in the area of career decision-making, goal-setting and personal awareness. Abubakari (2019) conducted a study on career guidance services in public senior secondary schools in Kano, Nigeria, using a mixed methods approach with a sample of 387 respondents from 21 schools.

While the study offered broad statistical insights, the large sample size limited the depth of individual responses and nuanced understanding of personal experiences. The current study addressed this by employing a qualitative approach with a smaller, more focused sample, allowing for in-depth exploration of how teacher guidance specifically influences students' selection of Advanced Level subject combinations.

Siamoo and Koda (2023) conducted a study on the extent to which guidance services in schools helps students' choice choose their subjects in ordinary level public secondary in Mwanga district Tanzania. The study employed mixed method approach using convergent research design. The data were collected through semi-structured interview, and questionnaire. Quantitative data was analyzed by using descriptively with the aid of SPSS version 22 and presented through frequencies, percentages and mean while qualitative data was analysed thematically.

The study found that guidance services in schools to a high extent facilitate students to choose subjects. Siamoo and Koda (2023) conducted a study on the extent to which guidance services help students choose subjects in ordinary-level public secondary schools in Mwanga District, Tanzania, using a mixed methods approach with a convergent design. While the study provided useful insights into general guidance

services, it focused on the ordinary level and used a design that prioritized breadth over depth. This presents a methodological gap. The current study used a purely qualitative approach to explore, in greater depth, the specific influence of teacher guidance on A-Level subject selection, addressing an area less explored by the previous study.

2.4.2 Teachers' views on students' Perceptions of the Guidance they receive from Teachers when Selecting Advanced Level Subject Combinations

A study conducted by Tsikati (2019) on the factors influencing choice of subject specialization prospective teachers at teachers training college in Eswatini in Swaziland. The study used pragmatism paradigm under mixed method approach using convergent or triangulation. This study involved 16 experts from teachers training institutions and career for PTD in Eswatini. Data collection involved a triangulation of modified Delphi technique and survey questionnaire. The Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics while the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

The findings found that student interest, attitude and impression, related exposure and the nature of subject specialization were factors influencing prospective students' choice of specialization at the teacher training institutions. Tsikati (2019) investigated factors influencing subject specialization among prospective teachers at a teacher training college in Eswatini, using a mixed methods approach under the pragmatism paradigm with a convergent design. However, the study was limited by a small sample

size, which restricts the generalizability of its findings. Additionally, it focused on trainee teachers rather than secondary school students.

The current study addressed this gap by targeting a broader and more relevant sample students and teachers in public secondary schools thus enhancing the applicability of findings to actual subject selection at the Advanced Level.

In Tanzania, Ndalichako and Komba (2014) on the students' subject choices in secondary schools. The study used mixed method approach under pragmatism paradigm. The data were collected through interview and questionnaire. A content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data while descriptive statistics was used to analyze quantitative data. The findings revealed that students' perceptions of teacher guidance when choosing advanced level subjects vary, with some citing positive influences like good teaching styles inspiring them to choose subjects. Ndalichako and Komba (2014) examined students' subject choices in secondary schools using a mixed methods approach under the pragmatism paradigm, collecting data through interviews and questionnaires. While the study provided a broad overview of factors influencing subject choices, it lacked an in-depth exploration of the specific role of teacher guidance in this process. This presents a methodological gap. The current study addressed this by adopting a purely qualitative approach, allowing for richer, more detailed insights into how teachers influence students' A-Level subject selection decisions.

Ntawigaya (2021) conducted a study on the choice of subject combinations among students in secondary schools in Tanzania. The study used mixed method approach with a cross-sectional design. It involved 165 respondents to collect the data through

questionnaire and interview. The data from questionnaire was analyzed by using descriptive statistics while the data from interview was analyzed using content analysis.

The study found out that most of the students were not comfortable on the subjects combinations they were studying. Ntawigaya (2021) conducted a study on the choice of subject combinations among secondary school students in Tanzania using a mixed methods approach with a cross-sectional design. While the study provided useful quantitative data from 165 respondents, its design limited the depth of understanding regarding personal experiences and teacher-student interactions during the subject selection process. This presents a methodological gap.

The current study addressed this by using a purely qualitative approach to gain deeper insights into the influence of teacher guidance through interviews and focus group discussions.

2.4.3 Challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combination selection

In Zambia, study conducted by Maliwa (2016) on the assessment of the provision of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools. The study employed qualitative approach. The data was collected through interview. The data was analyzed by using content analysis. The study found out that secondary school teachers lack skills and knowledge of guidance and counseling services.

Maliwa (2016) conducted a qualitative study assessing the provision of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools, using interviews as the primary data collection method. While the study offered valuable insights into guidance services, it

was conducted in a different national context with distinct educational structures and challenges. This presents a contextual gap. The current study addressed this by focusing specifically on the Tanzanian context, where educational policies, resource availability, and teacher roles may differ, thus requiring localized investigation into subject selection guidance.

In Kenya, a study conducted by Boit (2016) on the evaluation of the challenges in the implementation of the guidance and counseling programme in Baringo county secondary schools. The study used mixed methods approach, questionnaire, interview and observation to collect the data. The Data from qualitative source was analyzed by using content analysis while the data from quantitative data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. The study found out that insufficient resource in schools including time, materials and funds were the challenges facing the implementation of career guidance and counseling services in schools.

Boit (2016) conducted a study evaluating challenges in implementing guidance and counseling programs in Baringo County using a mixed methods approach, collecting data through questionnaires, interviews, and observation. While comprehensive, the study focused broadly on program implementation and did not specifically address how teacher guidance influences students' subject choices. Additionally, its reliance on quantitative tools like questionnaires limited deeper insights into personal experiences. The current study addressed this methodological gap by using a qualitative approach to explore students' and teachers lived experiences in subject selection guidance.

Alloph and Msonge (2023) conducted a study on challenges facing teachers in the provision of career guidance services to secondary school students in Tanzania. The study employed mixed method approach. The data were collected through interview and questionnaire. The quantitative data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS software while the qualitative data was analyzed by using content analysis. The findings indicate that lack of professional training on career guidance services materials, lack of co-operation among the students and teachers are the challenges facing teachers in the provision of career guidance. Alloph and Msonge (2023) investigated challenges teachers face in providing career guidance to secondary school students in Tanzania using a mixed methods approach. While their study identified general obstacles in delivering guidance services, it did not specifically examine how teacher guidance impacts students' decisions on Advanced Level subject combinations. This presents a knowledge gap. The current study filled this by focusing directly on the influence of teacher guidance on subject selection, offering a deeper understanding of its role in shaping students' academic and career pathways.

2.5 Research Gap

Several studies have investigated different dimensions of guidance and counseling in secondary education, yet important gaps remain in understanding how teachers' input shapes students' academic pathways. For example, Boit (2016) and Alloph & Msonge (2023) examined the challenges of implementing guidance programs and the general aspects of career counseling but did not specifically address subject selection decisions. Maliwa's (2016) qualitative work in Zambia revealed a contextual gap, as its findings cannot be fully applied to the Tanzanian setting due to differences in

education systems. Similarly, Ntawigaya (2021) and Ndalichako & Komba (2014) adopted mixed methods but offered limited qualitative depth, overlooking the lived experiences of students and teachers. Tsikati (2019) studied prospective teachers with a small sample, limiting generalization to current secondary students. Siamoo & Koda (2023) concentrated on the ordinary level rather than advanced studies, while Abubakari (2019) used a large sample that restricted detailed personal insights. In addition, Aslam et al. (2021) relied on a purely quantitative design, which overlooked the nuanced role of teachers in influencing subject choices. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge these gaps by employing a qualitative approach that captures both students' and teachers' perspectives within Tanzanian public secondary schools. By addressing methodological, contextual, and knowledge gaps, it generates practical insights to strengthen guidance practices and inform education policy.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a structured approach that outlines the key concepts, variables, and their presumed relationships within a study. It serves as a guide, enabling researchers to logically explain how and why phenomena occur by linking theory to practice (Adom et al, 2018). According to Kothari (2019), a conceptual framework provides clarity by organizing ideas and showing interconnections among variables under investigation. It helps in operationalizing variables, guiding data collection, and interpreting findings. Thus, a conceptual framework acts as both a map and a foundation, ensuring coherence and focus throughout the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

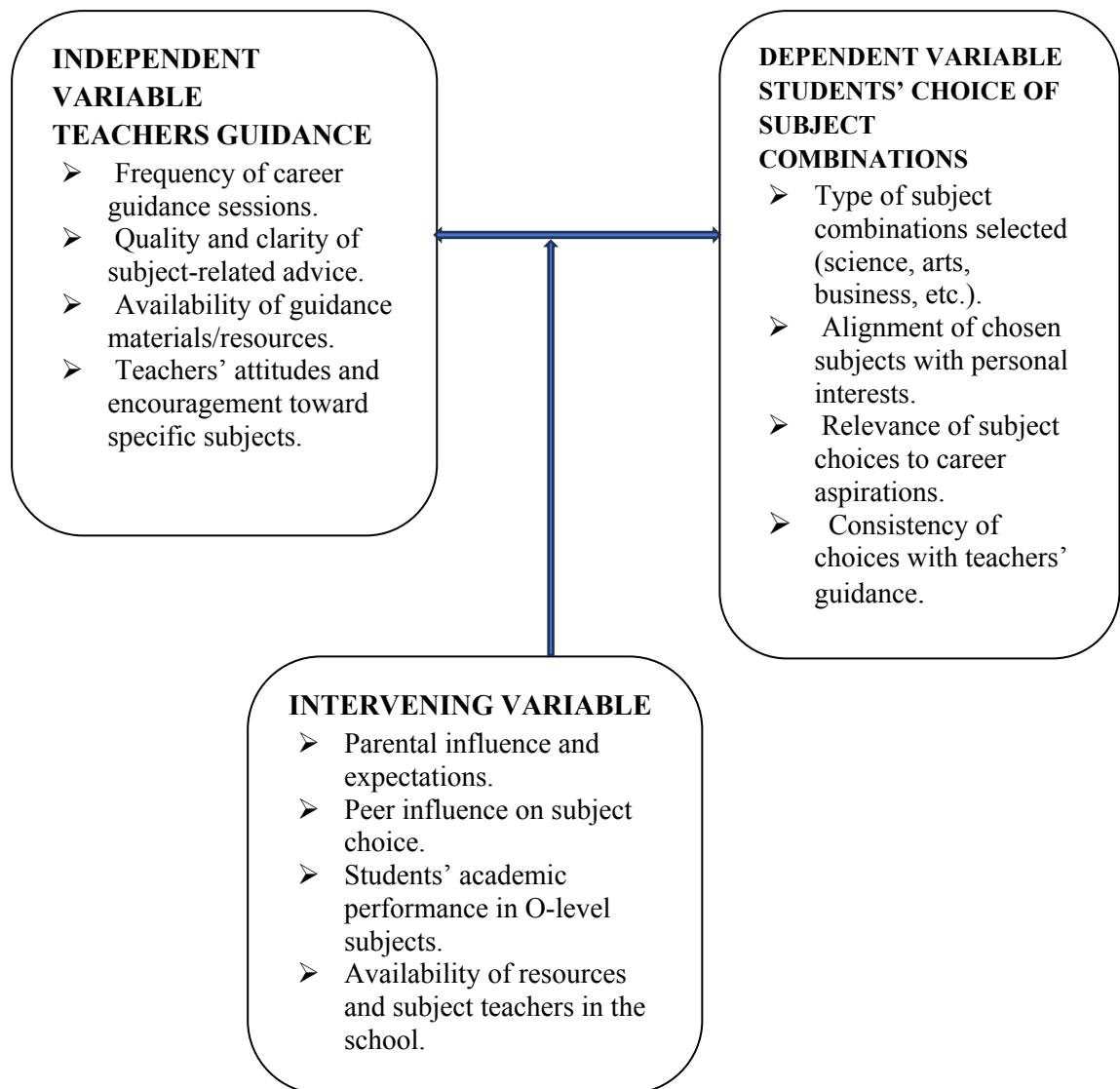


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: (Extracted by researcher, 2025)

The independent variable, teachers' guidance, influences students' choice of advanced level subject combinations through the mediating role of intervening variables. When teachers provide frequent, clear, and supportive guidance, students become more informed about available subject options, their relevance, and future career implications. However, the effect of this guidance is not direct alone; it passes through factors such as parental expectations, peer influence, and academic performance. For

example, even if a teacher encourages a science combination, a student's final decision may be shaped by parental advice, friends' choices, or their own past academic results. Thus, intervening variables bridge the relationship, either reinforcing or weakening the guidance provided. In this way, teachers' guidance indirectly impacts students' subject selection through these social and contextual factors.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the research methodology used to examine the perceived influence of teachers' guidance on students' choice of advanced level subject combinations in public secondary schools in Mbeya District Council. Therefore, this chapter comprised the research paradigm, research approach, research design, study area, study population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection tools, trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Paradigm

According to Creswell (2018), a research paradigm refers to the underlying framework or worldview that guides how research is conducted. It encompasses the philosophical assumptions, methodologies and approaches researchers use to explore and interpret the nature of knowledge, reality and research processes in their studies. This study adopted the interpretivism paradigm. Interpretivism was suitable for this study because it focused on understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals. In this context, it allowed for an in-depth exploration of students' and teachers' personal meanings, motivations, and social interactions, providing insights into how guidance shaped students' academic decisions within specific cultural and social settings.

3.3 Research Approach

This study used a qualitative approach. Generally, research approach is the overall plan or framework a researcher uses to conduct a study, According to Mugenda (2008),

a qualitative approach is a research method focused on understanding phenomena through non-numerical data. It emphasizes exploring participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings using methods such as interviews, focus groups, and observations. This approach aimed to provide in-depth insights into complex social processes and human behavior. The qualitative approach was suitable for this study because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of students' and teachers' personal experiences, opinions, and social interactions. This method helped to capture the complex and subjective nature of decision-making, providing rich insights into how guidance shaped academic choices in specific contexts.

3.4 Research Design

A case study design was employed in this study. A multiple case study design was highly suitable in this study as it allows for the exploration of this phenomenon across different contexts such as various schools or classrooms. This approach provides a detailed understanding of how guidance impacts decision-making in diverse settings, capturing variations in experiences, practices and outcomes. By comparing multiple cases, researchers can identify patterns and differences offering comprehensive insights into the influence of teachers' guidance on students' academic choices.

3.5 Study Area

The study was conducted in Mbeya District Council, located in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. Mbeya district council is a prominent council known for its strategic position along the Tanzania-Zambia highway making it a vital trade and transport hub. Geographically, it is characterized by a mix of mountains, plateaus and fertile plains contributing to its rich agricultural activities. The council is primarily engaged in

agriculture with crops like maize, beans, coffee, pyrethrum, sweet and round potatoes being key economic drivers. Additionally, Mbeya district council is known for its mineral resources including gold and other natural deposits. The study will focus on public secondary schools within the council exploring how teachers' guidance influences students' choice of advanced level combinations considering the council's unique socioeconomic and cultural context. Mbeya District Council has been chosen due to its unique blend of urban and rural schools which allows for a comprehensive examination of how teachers' guidance influences subject selection in diverse educational settings. Mbeya district council also has distinct socio-economic and cultural dynamics that may affect students' decision-making processes. Studying this study within Mbeya district council provides an opportunity to gather council - specific data contributing to a more nuanced understanding of guidance practices in education system.

3.6 Study Population

This study involved teachers, head of schools and district secondary education officer. Involving teachers, head of schools and the District Secondary Education Officer is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of how teachers' guidance influences students' choice of advanced level combinations. Teachers provide valuable insights into the daily academic interactions and guidance they offer students helping to reveal the specific factors that shape students' decisions. Head of schools offer a broader perspective on institutional policies, the school's educational environment and how guidance is structured at the organizational level. The District Secondary Education Officer on the other hand, plays a pivotal role in overseeing educational

policies and practices across the council ensuring that the study reflects the broader educational framework. Collectively, these participants provided diverse, in-depth perspectives enriching the study's findings. In this study, 350 teachers, 40 head of schools and 1 DSEO were involved, hence making a total of 391 participants.

3.7 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Usually qualitative studies involve small sample; qualitative studies do not require calculation to justify the sample size. The selection of this sample size was supported by Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) as argued that, when the study population is less than 10,000, a sample size of 10% to 30% is a good representation of the target population. Therefore 10% of 350 teachers was used. Also 10% of 40 heads of schools was used. The distribution of sample size under qualitative approach was 35 teachers, 4 head of schools and 1 District Secondary Education Officer, hence making a total of 40 participants under qualitative approach

Table3.1: Sample Distribution

S/N	Respondent category	Targeted Population	Sample size	Percent %	Sampling Technique
1	Teachers	350	35	10	Convenience sampling technique
2	Head of schools	40	4	10	Purposive sampling technique
3	DSEO	1	1	10	Purposive random sampling
Total		391	40		

Researcher field data, 2025

3.8 Sampling Techniques

Sampling techniques refer to the process of selecting participants or units from a larger population for research (Creswell, 2012). These techniques ensure a representative

sample that helps address the research questions. This study used purposive sampling techniques and convenience sampling techniques.

3.8.1 Convenience Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was used to select teachers for participation in the study based on their availability and proximity to the researcher. The researcher initially approached teachers from accessible schools within the study area, particularly those who were readily available and willing to participate. Teachers who were present during the data collection period and easily reachable due to their location or schedules were included in the sample. This approach proved practical under time and resource constraints, allowing the researcher to quickly gather data from willing participants.

3.8.2 Purposive Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select heads of schools and the District Secondary Education Officer because these individuals possess specific knowledge and expertise crucial to the study. The head of schools was selected based on their leadership roles and involvement in guiding students while the District Secondary Education Officer was chosen for their oversight of educational policies and practices. This approach ensures that key informants with relevant experience are included in the study.

3.9 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

This study used Semi-structured interview and focus group discussion as the methods for data collection

3.9.1 Semi-structured Interview

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with heads of schools and the District Secondary Education Officer, each typically lasting between 30 to 45 minutes. The researcher prepared open-ended questions in advance, allowing flexibility for participants to express their views. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher introduced the study's purpose and obtained consent to record the conversation. The interview began with general questions and progressed to specific topics, focusing on the role of school heads in student guidance and the district officer's perspective on educational policies. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate capture of responses, and key points were noted by the researcher. Follow-up questions were posed based on the participants' responses.

At the end of the session, participants were invited to provide any additional insights. The researcher concluded each interview by thanking the participants for their time and cooperation. Information on perceived role of teachers' guidance in influencing students' choice of advanced level subject combinations, students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when selecting advanced level subject combinations and identify the challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combination selection were gathered through method.

3.9.2 Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion involved 35 teachers organized into seven groups, each comprising five members, to gather insights on how they guided students in choosing advanced level subject combinations. Each session lasted approximately 60 to 90

minutes, with 6–8 teachers participating to ensure diverse perspectives while maintaining manageable group dynamics. The researcher began by introducing the study's purpose, assuring participants of confidentiality, and explaining the discussion process. A set of open-ended questions guided the conversation, encouraging teachers to share their experiences, challenges, and strategies in guiding students. Participants were encouraged to engage with one another's ideas, fostering rich, interactive dialogue. The discussion was audio-recorded with participants' consent, and key points were noted.

At the conclusion, the researcher invited any final thoughts and expressed gratitude to the teachers for their valuable contributions, ensuring a respectful and collaborative atmosphere throughout the session. Information on perceived role of teachers' guidance in influencing students' choice of advanced level subject combinations, Teachers views on students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when selecting advanced level subject combinations and identify the challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combinations selection were gathered through this method.

3.10 Data Analysis Plan

Content analysis was used to analyze data from interviews and focus group discussions by systematically identifying and categorizing themes, patterns, and key concepts as outlined by Krippendorff (2018). The first step involved transcribing the audio recordings from the interviews and focus groups. The researcher then thoroughly read all transcripts and documents to gain an overall understanding of the data. Relevant sections were coded into categories or themes related to the study's objectives, such

as teachers' guidance strategies and students' decision-making. Similar codes were then grouped into broader themes. Finally, the data were interpreted to draw conclusions, identifying recurring patterns and comparing findings across different data sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

3.11 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher applied the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured by using multiple data sources such as interviews and focus group discussions to triangulate findings and provide a comprehensive understanding. Member checking was conducted, allowing participants to review the findings for accuracy and alignment with their experiences.

Transferability was achieved by providing detailed contextual information about the study setting, enabling other researchers to judge the applicability of the findings to different contexts. Dependability was ensured through a clear audit trail, with the researcher documenting each step of the research process to enhance transparency and reproducibility. Finally, confirmability was maintained by practicing neutrality and objectivity, with the researcher reflecting on personal biases and ensuring the findings were rooted in the data rather than personal opinions.

3.12 Ethical Consideration Issues

To ensure ethical issues were addressed in the study, a research clearance letter was obtained from the office of the Director of Postgraduate Studies at the Open University of Tanzania. This letter confirmed that the research adhered to the institution's ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were

fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks, and voluntarily agreed to participate. Confidentiality was maintained by securely storing all participants' information which was accessible only to the researcher. Anonymity was guaranteed by excluding any identifying details in the reports or publications of the study. Participants were assigned codes instead of names to protect their identities. Additionally, the researcher strictly avoided plagiarism by properly citing all sources used in the study and ensuring that all findings were original with appropriate acknowledgment given to previous works.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on data analysis, presentation of findings and discussion on examine the Role of Teachers' Guidance in Influencing Students' Choice of Advanced Level Subject Combinations in Public Secondary Schools in Mbeya District Council. The data were gathered through semi-structured interview and focus group discussion from heads of schools, District Secondary Education Officer and teachers and the presentation of results was structured according to the following research objectives.

- i. To examine the perceived role of teachers' guidance in influencing students' choice of advanced level subject combinations
- ii. To analyse teachers' views on students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when choosing advanced level subject combinations
- iii. To identify the challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combination selection.

4.2 The Perceived Role of Teachers' Guidance in Influencing Students' Choice of Advanced Level Subject Combinations

The findings on the role of teachers' guidance in influencing students' choice of advanced level subject combinations were obtained from interviews and focus group discussion (FGDs). The findings of this objective were mainly from teachers' FGDs and were supported by the interview data from heads of schools and district education officer. The findings are presented in the following order.

4.2.1 Assist students identifying their interests, strengths and career aspirations

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed that teachers have a very crucial role of making ordinary level students in aware of their interests, strengths and career aspirations before jumping to choose advanced level subject combinations. When students are aware of these insights, they are triggered to choose appropriate subject combinations which align with their abilities, interests and their future ambitions. One teacher from focus group discussion coded FGD01 opined;

As teachers, we try our level best to help students choose appropriate subject combinations which they are able to perform better in advanced level secondary education. Most of the students are not aware of subject combinations that align with their career goals. For example, some students don't opt to study physics in ordinary level and at the mean time they want to study pharmacy as their future ambition. Thus, if we don't guide these students well, they probably won't meet their career goals (FGD01, 12th May, 2025).

Similarly, findings from interview data revealed that there were various initiatives adopted in public schools for the teachers to assess students' abilities in relation to students' career paths. One head of school coded HoS1 explained;

Teachers in this school have regular talks and discussions with students through one-on-one interviews, club sessions or even during class session. The aim is to raise awareness to the students on things to consider before choosing their career goals as well as learning students' interests. Through these programs, students are well guided and advised to choose subject combinations by considering their strength first before their interests (Personal communication, HoS1 12th May, 2025).

Again, District secondary Education Officer had this to say

we organize career guidance seminars and provide training to teachers to support students in making informed subject combination choices. This helps align their academic strengths with future career paths, reducing dropouts and improving performance (Personal communication, DSEO Mbeya DC, 14th May, 2025).

These findings indicate that teachers play a critical role in empowering students to navigate their interests, strengths, and long-term career aspirations. Through one-on-one interactions, classroom discussions, and organized career guidance sessions, teachers provide students with the tools and support they need to make thoughtful and informed decisions regarding subject combination choices. This guidance is essential because many students may not fully understand how their current academic strengths align with future career opportunities. Teachers help bridge this gap by encouraging students to reflect on their abilities and academic performance before considering personal interests. As a result, students are better positioned to select combinations that not only suit their capabilities but also enhance their chances of academic success and career readiness.

This informed decision-making process reduces the likelihood of mismatched choices, which often lead to poor performance or dropouts. Ultimately, the role of teachers in this process contributes significantly to student development and educational outcomes. The findings are supported by the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the role of personal factors, learning experiences, and social influences in shaping career decisions. According to SCCT, students' self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals significantly influence their academic and career choices (Lent et al, 1994). Teachers, by guiding students through discussions and career counseling, help strengthen student's self-efficacy and clarify outcome expectations, enabling them to make informed subject combination decisions. This aligns with the theory's assertion that supportive environments and role models, such as teachers, positively influence students' confidence and decision-making

processes. Thus, the guidance provided by teachers directly supports SCCT principles by enhancing students' ability to align their abilities with suitable academic and career paths.

These findings align with a study conducted by Khamis and Mkumbo (2018) who found that students who received regular career guidance from teachers made more appropriate subject combination choices and showed improved academic performance. Similarly, Mushaandja et al. (2015) emphasized that teacher-led career programs significantly influenced students' ability to align their strengths with realistic career goals. Another study by Okiror and Otabong (2015) revealed that schools with structured career guidance programs had lower dropout rates and better academic outcomes. These studies confirm that teacher involvement in students' career planning is essential in shaping informed decisions, thus supporting the findings and reinforcing the principles of the Social Cognitive Career Theory.

This finding contributes new knowledge by emphasizing the practical, school-level strategies used by teachers to support students' subject combination decisions in Mbeya District Council's specific context. Unlike many studies that focus on general policy or national-level interventions, this research reveals how teachers integrate career guidance into everyday school activities, such as class discussions, clubs, and personal interviews. It also sheds light on how teachers balance students' interests with their academic strengths, helping them avoid mismatched choices. This localized, practice-oriented insight fills a contextual gap and offers a model for other schools in similar settings. It underscores the importance of embedding guidance within the school routine, not as an occasional event but as a continuous support process.

4.2.2 Providing information about different subject combinations and their requirements

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed teachers in secondary schools has the role of providing information to the students on different specializations with their requirements. It is a crucial role as the students are well informed with important information on various specializations. Thus, the students may be aware of requirements that would enable them to various specializations available. One teacher from focus group discussion coded FGD02 discussed;

Many students are not exposed to many areas of specializations available except few who are from family with good education background. Also, we have another group of students who are aware of many professions but they are unaware of their requirements. So it is a teacher's role to inform students on specializations with their requirements (FGD02, 13th May, 2025).

Correspondingly, findings from interview data revealed that teachers are the primary source of information to students as far as advanced level subject combinations concern. The findings showed that teachers are prior informed before guiding students in selecting their advanced level subject combination. One head of school with a code HoS2 when asked affirmed;

Teachers are essential in providing guidance to students on choosing subject combination for Advanced level studies. Thus, teachers have to be supported with training and professional development in order to enhance their role in provision of effective guidance to their students (Personal communication, HoS2, 13th May, 2025).

Additionally, District Secondary Education Officer had this to say

We recognize the vital role teachers play in guiding students on subject combinations. Therefore, we prioritize regular training and workshops to equip them with updated skills and knowledge needed for effective career guidance (Personal communication, DSEO 14th May, 2025).

The quotes imply that supporting teachers through training is crucial for improving career guidance quality, which helps students make informed subject choices, ultimately enhancing academic success and aligning education with students' strengths and future career goals. This finding reveals that teachers play a fundamental role in equipping students with the necessary information about various subject combinations available for advanced level studies. By providing detailed explanations of each subject's requirements, teachers help students understand what skills and qualifications are essential for success in their chosen fields. This guidance enables students to make well-informed decisions that align with both their academic strengths and career aspirations.

Additionally, teachers often share their personal experiences and insights related to specific areas of specialization, which serves as valuable firsthand information for students. This mentorship not only motivates students but also provides them with a realistic perspective of what to expect in their academic and professional journeys.

Through this comprehensive support, teachers empower students to choose subject combinations that enhance their potential for success, reduce the risk of academic failure, and promote a clearer pathway toward their future careers. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) supports this finding by emphasizing the importance of learning experiences, self-efficacy, and social influence in career decision-making. Teachers, as key influencers, help shape students' beliefs in their abilities and guide them through informed subject choices. By sharing knowledge and personal experiences, teachers enhance students' self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

This aligns with SCCT, which suggests that supportive environments and role models positively impact students' confidence, career planning, and ability to pursue suitable academic and professional pathways. The finding aligns with several studies that emphasize the role of teachers in guiding students toward appropriate subject and career choices.

A study by Chireshe (2011) revealed that students who received career guidance from teachers were more confident in selecting subjects that aligned with their skills and ambitions. Similarly, Nyamwange (2016) found that students valued teachers' input more than that of parents or peers when making subject combination decisions. Additionally, Olamide and Olawaiye (2013) observed that teacher-led career counseling significantly influenced students' academic planning and improved their ability to choose suitable career paths. These studies support the current finding that teachers, through effective communication and shared experiences, play a vital role in shaping students' educational and professional futures.

Despite previous studies emphasizing the role of teachers in career guidance, this finding contributes new knowledge by highlighting the specific strategies teachers use, such as sharing personal academic experiences and breaking down subject requirements, to guide students in selecting advanced level combinations. It focuses on the Tanzanian context, particularly in Mbeya District Council, where localized challenges and curriculum demands influence subject selection. This practical, context-specific insight extends existing knowledge by showing how teacher-student interactions within the school environment directly impact students' academic choices.

It also emphasizes the importance of integrating career guidance into regular classroom activities for sustained student support.

4.2.3 Facilitating subject interest

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed teachers in secondary schools play a vital role of facilitating subject interest in advanced level subject combinations. When students' interest on particular subject combination is raised through teachers' guidance, the students' choices of advanced level subject combinations are easily influenced. From teachers' focus group discussion coded FGD03, teachers discussed in unison saying;

Teachers in public secondary schools have to raise students' interest on subject combinations. This can be done through teachers' teaching styles in class as well as provision of relevant real-world examples. That is to say: when teachers create positive learning environment, students can be well guided and influenced to have interest on a particular subject combination (FGD03, 14th May 2025).

On the other hand, the findings from interview data showed that teachers' guidance in influencing students' choice of advanced level subject combinations can be attained when a teacher provides subject combination expertise to the students in public secondary schools. One head of school with a code HoS3 elaborated;

Teachers can share their experience, knowledge and expertise in order to assist students understand subject combinations' depth and breadth. The students are helped to develop prior knowledge of subject combination before entering form five. Thus, students are mentally prepared on the strength and weakness of each subject combination. This ultimately influence students' choices of various subject combinations (Personal communication, HoS3, 14th May 2025).

Similarly, DSEO commented

We encourage teachers to use their experience and subject expertise to guide students in understanding the demands of each combination. This helps students build prior knowledge and make informed choices

before joining Form Five (Personal communication, DSEO Mbeya District Council, 14th May, 2025).

The quotes imply that leveraging teachers' experience and subject expertise is crucial in preparing students for advanced-level studies. By developing students' prior knowledge and mental readiness, teachers help reduce confusion and misinformed decisions. This leads to more appropriate subject combination choices, improved academic performance, and increased confidence in students' academic and career planning. These findings show that there are various ways teachers can use to facilitate and nurture students' interest in subject combinations.

Teachers play a central role in identifying students' strengths, understanding their academic abilities, and using that knowledge to spark interest in relevant subject areas. This may involve personalized discussions, classroom guidance, career clubs, or sharing real-life applications of different subjects to help students see their value and relevance. When students develop genuine interest in particular subjects, it becomes easier for teachers to guide them through the selection process in a more meaningful and effective way. Interest acts as a motivational factor, leading students to engage more deeply with the subjects and make thoughtful decisions. Without interest, students may make poor choices that do not align with their abilities, leading to low performance or even dropout.

Therefore, teachers do not choose for students but rather guide them by aligning interest with academic strengths and career potential. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) supports this finding by emphasizing the role of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal interests in shaping academic and career choices. According to SCCT, students are more likely to pursue subjects they find interesting

and believe they can succeed in. Teachers, by helping students explore their strengths and build confidence, enhance their self-efficacy and stimulate interest in specific subject combinations. This guidance fosters informed decision-making, as students are motivated to choose combinations aligned with both their interests and capabilities. SCCT thus validates the importance of interest-building as a foundation for successful academic and career pathways.

This finding is supported by Bandura et al. (2001) who found that students with higher self-efficacy and interest in particular subjects were more likely to make informed and confident academic choices. Similarly, Mkumbo (2017) reported that students who received interest-based guidance from teachers selected more suitable subject combinations and performed better academically. Additionally, Salami (2008) found that interest-driven career counseling helped students choose subjects aligned with both their academic abilities and career goals. These studies reinforce the idea that fostering student interest, guided by teacher support, leads to more effective subject combination choices and improved academic outcomes, aligning with SCCT principles. This study adds new knowledge by providing a detailed understanding of how teachers in Kwimba District specifically facilitate the development of students' interests in subject combinations, a focus not extensively covered in previous research. While earlier studies emphasize the general importance of interest and self-efficacy in career decisions, this study highlights practical strategies used by teachers within a Tanzanian rural context to nurture and align interests with academic strengths. It also explores the cultural and educational challenges unique to this region, offering localized insights that can inform tailored interventions. Furthermore, the study

underscores the continuous, interactive role of teachers in guiding students' academic choices beyond formal counseling sessions, contributing to a more comprehensive model of career guidance in resource-limited settings.

4.3 Teachers' views on Students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when selecting advanced level subject combinations

The findings on teachers' views on Students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when selecting advanced level subject combinations were obtained from interviews and focus group discussion (FGDs). The findings of this objective were mainly from teachers' FGDs and were supported by the interview data from heads of schools and district education officer. The findings are presented in the following order.

4.4 Guidance received aligns with student's needs and aspiration

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed students in public secondary schools have positive perception on the guidance they receive from their teachers when selecting advanced level subject combinations. The findings show that students perceive the guidance received on subject combination selection from their teachers was valuable as it aligns with their needs and aspirations. One teacher from teachers' FGD coded FGD01 discussed;

Almost all students in our school receive guidance from their class teachers, academic teachers as well as other teachers on subject combination selection before sitting for certificate of secondary education examination (CSEE). We normally get feedback from them as they say that teachers' guidance reflects their aspirations so they take them positively (FGD01, 12th May, 2025).

Similarly, the findings from interview data revealed that students' perceptions are shaped positively or negatively depending on the nature of teachers' guidance on subject combination selection provided to them. One head of school with a code HoS1 elaborated;

Students are aware of how they are guided by their teachers. So when students receive guidance which aligns with their needs, desire and aspirations, they take it very positively and the vice versa is true. In my experience I have seen positive perceptions of students on the guidance they receive from their teachers because students believe teachers are their think tank (Personal communication, HoS1, 12th May 2025).

On other hand, District Secondary Education Officer had this to say

When teachers provide guidance that matches students' interests and ambitions, students respond well. They trust their teachers' advice and see them as key supporters in shaping their academic future. Effective guidance builds strong student-teacher relationships and encourages positive academic decisions (Interview with DSEO, 12th May 2025).

The quotes imply that the quality and relevance of teachers' guidance significantly shape students' perceptions and decisions regarding subject combinations selection. When guidance aligns with students' interests and goals, it fosters trust and positive engagement. This highlights the importance of personalized and student-centered guidance, as it can enhance decision-making and strengthen the student-teacher relationship, leading to better academic outcomes. These findings show that teachers in public secondary schools have been guiding well their students on how to select advanced level subject combinations.

This is due to the fact that students were continuously working on the guidance they receive from their teachers for the purpose of shaping their careers. Thus, the guidance provided were valuable to students in selecting appropriate subject combinations for

advanced level studies. These findings indicate that teachers in public secondary schools play a crucial role in guiding students during the selection of advanced level subject combinations. The guidance provided by teachers is not only continuous but also meaningful, helping students to make informed decisions that align with their academic strengths and future career aspirations. Students actively engage with the advice and information they receive, using it to carefully consider and choose subject combinations that best fit their interests and goals.

This ongoing interaction between teachers and students ensures that the guidance is relevant and impactful, contributing positively to students' academic journeys. Furthermore, students perceive the guidance as valuable and trustworthy, which motivates them to take it seriously. As a result, the teacher-led guidance process supports students in making appropriate choices, ultimately enhancing their readiness for advanced studies and improving their prospects for future academic and professional success.

The findings coincide with SCCT theory as the theory postulates that teachers act as social agents whose guidance may affect students' confidence in their academic choices and their expectations of future success, thereby influencing their selection of subject combinations. These findings are supported by studies emphasizing the positive impact of teacher guidance on students' subject selection and career planning. For example, Oyewole (2016) found that consistent and personalized career counseling by teachers significantly improves students' ability to choose subjects that match their interests and future goals. Similarly, Mbiti (2015) highlighted that students

who receive continuous guidance from teachers demonstrate higher confidence in their academic decisions and perform better in advanced studies.

Both studies emphasize the importance of teacher-student interactions in shaping effective subject choices. Furthermore, Mkumbo (2012) argued that when teachers provide relevant and tailored advice, students are more likely to appreciate and act upon it, leading to better academic outcomes. This study adds new knowledge by highlighting how continuous and personalized guidance from teachers directly influences students' engagement with their academic choices in Tanzanian public secondary schools. Unlike previous research that generally emphasized teacher roles, this study reveals the dynamic interaction where students actively work with the guidance provided to shape their career paths. It also underscores the importance of trust and the perception of guidance as valuable, showing that effective teacher-student relationships enhance the relevance and acceptance of advice. This insight calls for strengthening ongoing teacher support to maximize students' informed decision-making in subject selection.

4.4.1 Students feel supported and informed

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed students in public secondary schools felt supported and informed when they were provided with teachers' guidance on advanced level subject combination selections. One teacher in a focus group discussion coded FGD02 discussed;

When teachers provide students with relevant information about different subject combinations, students may take decisions which are well informed. For example, you may find that students want certain subject combination but they don't know if they are marketable in today's world. Therefore, it is a teacher's duty to help these students

choose subject combinations which are marketable (FGD02, 13th May, 2025).

Similarly, the findings from interview data showed that students in public secondary schools feel supported when they are guided in selecting advanced level subject combinations by their teachers. A district education officer coded DSEO when asked explained;

From psychological point of view, students always believe that their teachers know their abilities and subject combinations which they handle and perform better. So, students perceive their teachers' guidance is more credible and helpful as it connects their academic abilities and their career paths (Personal communication, DSEO, 16th May, 2025).

Additionally, one of the head of school coded HoS2 had this to say

Students trust that teachers understand their academic strengths and weaknesses. That's why they value teachers' guidance in subject selection it feels personalized and credible. They believe their teachers can link their classroom performance with suitable subject combinations that align with their future career goals (Interview with HoS2, 16th May 2025).

The quotes imply that students place high trust in their teachers' academic judgment, believing teachers understand their strengths and potential. This perception makes teacher guidance more influential in shaping students' subject combinations decisions. It highlights the psychological importance of teacher-student relationships in academic planning and suggests that personalized guidance can positively impact students' educational and career trajectories. Therefore, these findings demonstrate that students hold positive perceptions regarding the guidance provided by teachers in the process of selecting appropriate advanced level subject combinations. This positive outlook stems from the supportive role that teachers play in ensuring students are well-informed before making crucial academic decisions.

Teachers not only offer information about the available subject combinations but also explain the implications of each choice in relation to students' abilities, interests, and long-term career goals. As a result, students feel more confident and reassured, knowing that their decisions are based on informed discussions rather than guesswork or external pressure.

The guidance process typically involves one-on-one discussions, group counseling sessions, and exposure to relevant resources, which help students reflect on their strengths and aspirations. This interaction builds trust and reinforces the belief that teachers genuinely care about their academic success. Consequently, students are more likely to follow the advice given, which improves the chances of selecting combinations that suit their academic profiles. The supportive environment fostered by teachers empowers students to take ownership of their educational paths and develop the resilience needed to excel in their chosen combinations.

These findings highlight the essential role of teacher-student relationships in successful academic planning and future career development. These findings are well supported by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting in career-related decisions. When teachers provide accurate, relevant, and personalized guidance, students develop a stronger belief in their ability to succeed in their chosen subject combinations (self-efficacy). The guidance also shapes positive outcome expectations, as students understand how their choices align with future career paths.

Moreover, teacher support helps students set clear, realistic academic goals. SCCT also highlights the role of social influences such as teachers as critical in shaping

students' confidence and motivation to make informed educational and career decisions. These findings align with studies by Komba and Nkumbi (2008) and Oyewole (2016), which emphasize the critical role of teacher guidance in shaping students' academic choices. Komba and Nkumbi found that Tanzanian students who received informed and supportive guidance from teachers were more likely to select subject combinations aligned with their strengths and career goals. Similarly, Oyewole (2016) observed that students perceived teachers as credible advisors and were more confident in their choices when properly guided. Furthermore, Siamoo and Koda (2023) found that guidance services in schools to a high extent facilitate students to choose the intended subjects.

Both studies confirm that teacher support fosters positive perceptions, enhances decision-making, and contributes to students' long-term academic and professional development. These findings add new knowledge by illustrating how personalized and continuous teacher guidance enhances students' self-efficacy and positive outcome expectations during subject combination selection in Tanzanian public secondary schools. Unlike previous research that focused mainly on teacher roles, this study highlights the psychological impact of guidance on students' confidence and motivation. It also emphasizes the importance of teacher-student relationships in fostering resilience and goal-setting, offering a deeper understanding of how effective guidance directly influences both academic decisions and long-term career development.

4.4.2 Teachers impose their own preferences

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed that students negatively perceived guidance given by their teachers because teachers impose their own preferences on subject combinations. One teacher in a focus group discussion coded FGD03 discussed:

Students are likely to demonstrate negative perceptions on teachers' guidance only if teachers' guidance is characterized with their personal preferences. Some teachers have tendency of pressurizing students towards certain subject combinations selection because they are in love with them. This will lead to resentment as a result students develop bad perception to teachers' guidance (FGD03, 14th May, 2025).

Nevertheless, findings from interview data showed that students perceived teachers' guidance as irrelevant if teachers are biased towards some subject combinations that students admire to choose. One head of school with a code HoS2 elaborated;

Students don't value teachers' guidance on subject combinations selection if teachers provide guidance without considering students' preferences. There are teachers who are very emotional and driven a lot by their personal interests when guiding students in selecting advanced level subject combinations. Science teachers are commonly forcing students to select science subject combinations (Personal communication, HoS2, 13th May, 2025).

Similarly, DSEO had this to say

Some teachers push students towards science subjects based on their own beliefs without considering students' abilities or interests. This pressure often discourages students and leads to poor performance, as they feel forced rather than supported in their choices" (DSEO, 14th May 2025).

The quotes imply that teachers' biasness and pressure can undermine students' confidence and motivation, leading to negative perceptions of guidance and poor academic outcomes. When students feel coerced into subject choices that do not match their interests or abilities, it ruins trust in teachers and reduces the effectiveness of

career counseling, highlighting the need for more student-centered guidance approaches. The findings reveal a critical challenge in public secondary schools where some teachers' guidance on advanced level subject combinations selection are negatively perceived by students.

This negative perception largely stems from teachers imposing their personal preferences rather than considering the individual abilities, interests, and aspirations of students. In particular, there is a tendency among some teachers to pressure students into choosing science subject combinations, often regarded as prestigious or more valuable, despite students lacking the aptitude or interest in these areas. This misalignment creates frustration and undermines the guidance process, leading students to feel misunderstood and discouraged.

Similar studies support these findings. For example, Mkumbo (2012) found that in Tanzanian secondary schools, teacher biasness towards science subjects often ignores student strengths and preferences, which can result into poor academic performance and decreased motivation. Likewise, Tsikati (2019) reported that students pressured to select subjects they are not interested in often develop negative attitudes toward school and experience increased dropout rates. Additionally, Ntawigaya (2021) whose study found out that most of the students were not comfortable on the subject's combinations they study after following their teachers' guidance characterized with teachers own preferences on subject combinations.

Both studies highlight that effective guidance must prioritize students' interests and capabilities to foster positive educational outcomes. These findings emphasize the need for teacher training focused on student-centered counseling approaches to ensure

guidance respects individual student needs and promotes academic success. These findings support Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal interests in career decision-making. When teachers impose their own preferences, ignoring students' abilities and interests, students' self-efficacy diminishes, leading to lower confidence in their academic choices.

This pressure also negatively affects outcome expectations, making students less optimistic about succeeding in subjects they did not choose willingly. SCCT highlights that career development is influenced by both personal and environmental factors; thus, unsupportive or biased teacher guidance creates an adverse environment that undermines students' motivation and hampers informed, satisfying subject selection decisions. This study adds new knowledge by revealing how teacher bias and pressure negatively impact students' perceptions and academic choices in Tanzanian public secondary schools. Unlike prior research focusing mainly on external constraints, this finding highlights the internal school environment specifically teacher attitudes as a critical factor influencing students' subject selection. It underscores that when guidance disregards students' interests and self-efficacy, it can lead to disengagement and poor performance. This insight calls for more emphasis on training teachers to adopt student-centered, unbiased counseling approaches, promoting positive student experiences and better alignment between subject choices and individual strengths.

4.5 Guidance received reduce uncertainties

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed that students in public secondary schools perceived that the guidance they received from their teachers on

subject combinations selection reduce uncertainties on their career paths. This is because students often uncertain on their subject combination choices. From teachers' focus group discussion coded FGD04, teachers discussed;

As teachers, we elucidate the future and reduce the inherent uncertainty. We help students assess their personal interest, passions and their inherent strength to enable them to understand their unique position of the subject combination possibilities. With the guidance they receive, they move into the right direction of a more known path (FGD04, 15th May 2025).

The findings from interview data showed that teachers provide comprehensive guidance on various advanced level subject combinations reduce fear of making wrong decision. One head of school coded HoS3 when asked explained;

When teachers guide students on subject combination selection, they provide clarity information. The teachers' guidance can involve exploring various subject combinations and connecting students with relevant resources. By doing these, a student will be confident with his or her choice and knows exactly what he/she is going to study (Personal communication, HoS3, 14th May, 2025).

On other hand, when District Secondary Education Officer asked stated that

When teachers clearly explain the available subject combinations and link students to helpful resources, it boosts students' confidence. They become more certain about their academic path and feel assured in their decisions, knowing what each combination involves (Interview with DSEO, 14th May 2025).

The quotes imply that clear and informative guidance from teachers enhances students' confidence and understanding in subject combination selection. When students are well-informed and supported with relevant resources, they are more likely to make suitable academic choices. This underscores the importance of equipping teachers with up-to-date knowledge to effectively support students' educational and career planning. The findings indicate that students actively engage in discussions with their

teachers regarding subject combination options, allowing them to make well-informed decisions about their academic futures.

Through these interactions, students not only gain a deeper understanding of the subject combinations available but also build the confidence and resilience needed to face unforeseen challenges once they are on transition to advanced level studies. This dialogue creates a supportive environment where students feel encouraged to pursue subject combinations that align with their interests and strengths. Teachers play a critical role in this process by offering guidance, encouragement, and realistic perspectives on what each subject entails, thus empowering students to follow their passions. As a result, students become more committed and better prepared to overcome academic challenges, increasing their likelihood of success.

These findings underscore the importance of teacher-student engagement in subject selection, as it directly contributes to student motivation, academic performance, and long-term educational satisfaction. These findings align with Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting in career decision-making. Through discussions with teachers, students gain confidence (self-efficacy) in their subject choices and develop realistic expectations about future outcomes. This guidance helps them set achievable academic goals and prepares them to face challenges with resilience. SCCT also highlights the importance of supportive environments such as teacher guidance in fostering students' ability to make informed and meaningful academic and career decisions. The findings coincide with Abubakari (2019) whose study found out the school counselor played a great role in the area of career decision-making, goal-setting and personal awareness

while Siamoo and Koda (2023) who articulated that guidance services play a crucial role on facilitating students to choose subjects as majority of subject teachers, parents and other education stakeholders help students to be aware of the importance of making proper subject selection in relation to their combinations which will lead them into the intended future outcomes.

4.6 Challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combination selection

The findings on Challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combination selection were obtained from interviews and focus group discussion (FGDs). The findings of this objective were mainly from teachers' FGDs and were supported by the interview data from heads of schools and district secondary education officer. The findings are presented in the following order.

4.6.1 Mismatch with student's needs

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed that some teachers' guidance on advanced level subject combinations selection doesn't align with student's needs. Teachers in public secondary schools were involved in provision of guidance to students as far as advanced level subject combinations are concerned but some of their (teachers) guidance go astray with student's needs. Teachers in focus group discussion coded FGD1 discussed;

Every student has his or her needs and target in the education journey. Some of them need to be doctors and yet a teacher guides them to take arts subject combinations. That is a challenge for sure because a student may be demotivated as a result his or her performance declines (FGD1, 12th May, 2025).

On the other hand, the findings from the interview data showed that teachers sometimes mismatch with the needs of students because teachers are highly considering students' ability to handle subject combinations against students' interest.

One head of school coded HoS4 when asked revealed;

Teachers always consider students' academic fitness and abilities of their students in the way of guiding students to appropriate selection of subject combination. However, teachers face challenges when guiding students on subject combinations selection. The most common obstacle is mismatch of teachers' guidance with the students' aspirations and needs. Students may like a certain subject combination without assessing their abilities (Personal communication, HoS4, 15th May, 2025).

Additionally, DSEO commented this

While teachers are committed to guiding students based on their academic strengths, challenges still arise. One major issue is the mismatch between students' career aspirations and their actual academic abilities, which often leads to unrealistic subject choices (Personal communication with DSEO, 15th May, 2025).

The quotes imply that although teachers provide valuable academic guidance, students may still choose subject combinations based on personal aspirations rather than realistic self-assessment. This disconnect can lead to poor academic performance or failure. It highlights the need for stronger collaboration between teachers and students in aligning goals with academic capabilities. This finding indicates that the mismatch between teachers' guidance and students' aspirations often stems from teachers' genuine intentions to help students select subject combinations that align with their academic strengths. Teachers aim to ensure that students choose combinations they are most likely to excel in based on their performance and potential. However, challenges arise when students are drawn to certain subject combinations due to personal interests, peer influence, or career aspirations without fully considering their

academic readiness. As a result, students may insist on choosing combinations that exceed their current capabilities, leading to potential academic struggles and even failure.

This creates a tension between the professional judgment of teachers and the personal desires of students. The situation highlights the importance of balancing student aspirations with honest academic assessment. It also suggests the need for enhanced career guidance approaches that incorporate both student interests and academic evaluations to support realistic and successful subject selection decisions. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) supports these findings by emphasizing the dynamic interaction between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals in career decision-making.

According to SCCT, students may have strong aspirations for certain subject combinations, but if their academic self-efficacy or the belief in their ability to succeed is not aligned with the demands of those subjects, challenges arise. Teachers attempt to guide students based on their actual capabilities, which reflects an effort to align students' goals with realistic outcome expectations. SCCT validates this approach by suggesting that successful academic and career choices require a balance between personal interests and demonstrated abilities. The findings are consistent with those of Tsikati (2019), who found that students' interest, attitude, prior exposure, and the nature of subject specialization significantly influenced their choice of specialization at teacher training institutions. Similarly, a study by Chireshe (2011) revealed that students often chose subjects based on perceived prestige or peer influence, ignoring their actual academic capabilities. Additionally, Olamide and Olawaiye (2013) also

found that personal interests and emotional attachment to certain subjects often led to mismatches between student choices and performance outcomes.

These studies support the current findings by highlighting the need for balanced career guidance that considers both student aspirations and their academic fitness to ensure informed and achievable subject combination choices. This finding adds new knowledge by highlighting the practical challenges teachers face when students' aspirations conflict with their academic abilities, a perspective less explored in previous research. It sheds light on the tension between student autonomy and teacher guidance, particularly in subject combination selection for advanced level studies. The study emphasizes the importance of developing guidance models that integrate students' interests with objective academic assessments. This insight can inform policy and practice to improve decision-making support systems within secondary schools, especially in under-resourced contexts.

4.6.2 Lack of relevant information on diverse combinations

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed that teachers in public secondary schools lack relevant information on diverse advanced level subject combinations. This was regarded as challenges in a sense that it limited teachers to provide relevant guidance to students on subject combinations selections. Teachers in focus group discussion coded FGD2 discussed;

It is not true that teachers do not have information about the issue of subject combinations: they do not have enough information. This is because the government changed advanced level combinations two years ago. Currently, there are 88fm subject combinations, making it difficult for a teacher to guide a student in choosing these combinations (FGD2, 13th May 2025).

Also, the findings from interview data revealed that some teachers were unable to provide specific information about subject combinations when guiding their students in making choices on advanced level subject combinations. This claim was articulated by one head of school coded HoS1 as asserted;

Some teachers do not bother themselves to find enough information on advanced level subject combinations. This made them struggle in provision of guidance to their students when they are consulted. This kind of teachers are likely to mislead students as students may choose inappropriate subject combinations (Personal information, HoS1, 12th May 2025).

A District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO) remarked:

Many teachers lack up-to-date knowledge on the new subject combinations introduced by the government. Some have not made efforts to update themselves, which limits their ability to effectively guide students during subject selection at the advanced level (DSEO, 12th May 2025).

The quote implies that inadequate teacher awareness and lack of initiative in updating their knowledge on subject combinations hinder effective student guidance. This gap may lead students to make poor academic choices, affecting their future careers. It also reflects a need for ongoing professional development and improved information dissemination from education authorities to support teachers' advisory roles. The findings reveal that Tanzania's education system has experienced several changes over the years, particularly in the structure and offering of subject combinations at the advanced level.

One significant recent change was the introduction of new subject combinations, which has expanded the options available to students. However, this development has posed challenges for many teachers who are responsible for guiding students in making informed choices. Due to a lack of timely training and insufficient access to updated

information, many teachers do not fully understand the newly adopted combinations. As a result, their ability to offer adequate and accurate guidance becomes limited. This inadequacy risks students making inappropriate subject choices that may not align with their career goals or academic strengths. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) explains that career choices are influenced by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and environmental factors.

In this context, teachers' limited knowledge about new subject combinations undermines their self-efficacy and confidence to provide effective guidance. Without accurate information, teachers' outcome expectations regarding students' success with certain subject combinations become uncertain, which affects the quality of their advice. Additionally, environmental factors such as insufficient training and support from the education system further restrict teachers' ability to guide students. Therefore, the inadequate teacher guidance on subject choices can negatively influence students' career development and decision-making processes. The findings align with similar studies highlighting challenges teachers face in providing career guidance due to limited knowledge.

For example, Tsikati (2019) found that inadequate teacher training on subject combinations led to poor guidance in Ghanaian secondary schools. Similarly, Mkumbo (2012) observed in Tanzania that many teachers lacked updated information on curriculum changes, affecting their advisory roles. Both studies emphasize that without continuous professional development, teachers struggle to keep pace with evolving education systems, resulting in students receiving insufficient support in subject selection.

These studies support the current findings by showing that teacher knowledge gaps are a widespread issue that negatively impact students' academic and career choices, underscoring the need for improved teacher training and information dissemination. These findings contribute new knowledge by highlighting the specific impact of recent changes in Tanzania's advanced level subject combinations on teachers' ability to guide students effectively. Unlike previous studies that broadly address teacher knowledge gaps, this research pinpoints how the rapid expansion to over fifty subject combinations create confusion and limits teachers' capacity to provide precise guidance.

It also underscores the importance of timely information dissemination and continuous professional development tailored to curriculum changes. This insight emphasizes that policy changes must be accompanied by adequate teacher support to ensure successful student guidance, thereby adding a practical dimension to improving career counseling in evolving education systems.

4.6.3 Parental influence on subject combinations choices

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed that parents of the students were reportedly to hinder the guidance process of teachers to students' subject combination selections in public secondary schools. Parents are said to have huge influence to their children (students) when selecting subject combination. One teacher from focus group discussion coded FGD3 discussed;

It is difficult to guide a student who was already influenced to select a certain subject combination by his or her parents. Mostly these kinds of students follow their parents' influence. It is not bad for parents to direct students towards subject combination selection but mostly they don't advice well their children (FGD3, 14th May 2025).

The findings from interview data also revealed that some parental influence to their children is highly triggered by parental unrealistic expectations as a result they demonstrate inappropriate influence to their children. When the District education officer was asked, he said;

Parental expectations can influence students' subject combinations. Some parents may encourage their children to pursue science subjects and mathematics due to the perceived job security and prestige associated with these fields. Thus, it is hard for a teacher to guide these students to take arts subject combinations (Personal communication, DSEO, 16th May 2025).

The quote implies that strong parental influence, often driven by unrealistic expectations or societal perceptions, can override professional guidance from teachers. This limits students' autonomy and may lead to unsuitable subject choices that do not match their interests or abilities. Consequently, teachers face challenges in providing effective guidance, potentially affecting students' academic performance and long-term career satisfaction. These findings indicate that parental influence plays a significant role in shaping students' decisions regarding their subject combinations as they are often the primary influencers in their children's educational decisions. This act is regarded as challenge towards teachers' guidance to students' subject combinations selection as parents can easily be driven by their personal and emotional traits.

The findings are similar to Siamoo and Koda (2023) who articulated that guidance services play a crucial role on facilitating students to choose subjects as majority of subject teachers, parents and other education stakeholders help students to be aware of the importance of making proper subject selection in relation to their combinations which will lead them into the intended future outcomes. The findings align with Social

Cognitive Career Theory, which suggests that individuals learn and make decisions through observation, imitation, and interaction with influential models. Parental influence aligns with this theory, as students often adopt educational choices modeled by their parents. This can challenge teachers' guidance, since parental expectations, driven by emotions or personal experiences, significantly shape students' subject choices and career aspirations.

4.6.4 Socioeconomic background of students

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed that socioeconomic background of students are significant obstacle of students' subject choices. Teachers' guidance on subject selections may not be considered by the students. Teachers in focus group discussion coded FGD4 highlighted;

Students from higher socioeconomic background tend to have more flexibility in their subject choices as they are normally opting for subjects that align with their interest knowing that their parents will support them contrarily to those from lower socioeconomic background whose consideration is based on economic wellbeing of their parents to handle their schooling (FGD4, 15th May 2025).

Similarly, the findings from interview data revealed that socioeconomic status of students influence students to negate the guidance given by their teachers as one head of school coded HoS3 explained;

Students from poor families households often tend to opt subject combinations which are not expensive to fund learning materials (arts subjects). For example, many of arts textbooks are sold below 15000 TSH, while science textbooks are even sold for 100,000 TSH (HoS3, 14th May 2025).

The District Secondary Education Officer noted that

Students from low-income families frequently choose subject combinations based on affordability rather than interest. They often avoid science subjects due to the high costs of textbooks and

materials, preferring arts subjects which are cheaper and easier for their parents to support financially (Interview with DSEO, 14th May 2025).

The quotes imply that socioeconomic status significantly influences students' subject choices, with financially disadvantaged students prioritizing affordability over interest or career goals. This economic constraint can limit access to science and technical subjects, potentially widening educational inequalities and affecting future opportunities. It highlights the need for policies that address financial barriers to ensure equitable access to all subject combinations. These findings reveal that teachers in public secondary schools do offer guidance to students when selecting advanced level subject combinations.

However, the effectiveness of this guidance is often limited by the students' socioeconomic backgrounds. Students from lower-income families tend to prioritize affordability when choosing subjects, often selecting arts subjects due to lower costs, which restricts the teachers' ability to influence their decisions. Conversely, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, who have greater financial flexibility, are less likely to seek or accept guidance from teachers because they tend to feel confident in their own knowledge and decision-making.

This situation challenges teachers' roles in providing meaningful advice and highlights how socioeconomic factors shape not only the choices students make but also the dynamics of the guidance process itself. The findings can be supported by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the role of personal, environmental, and behavioral factors in career decision-making. Socioeconomic status and environmental factors shape students' access to resources and opportunities,

influencing their subject choices. Students from wealthier backgrounds have more confidence and support, affecting their self-efficacy and reducing reliance on teacher guidance. Conversely, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face financial constraints that limit their options, demonstrating how external factors affect career-related decisions.

The findings concur with Tsikati (2019) who articulated that students' related exposure and the nature of subject specialization were factors influencing prospective students' choice of specialization at the teacher training institutions. Additionally, Maundu (2017) found that students from low-income families often select subjects based on affordability rather than interest, limiting their academic and career prospects. Likewise, Komba and Nkumbi (2008) reported that socioeconomic status strongly influences students' subject choices in Tanzanian secondary schools, with wealthier students having greater freedom to pursue preferred subjects, while poorer students are constrained by financial limitations. Both studies highlight how economic factors shape educational decisions, aligning with the current findings.

This finding adds new knowledge by demonstrating how socioeconomic status not only influences students' subject choices but also affects the effectiveness of teacher guidance. It uniquely reveals that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds may disregard teachers' advice due to perceived self-sufficiency, while those from lower-income families are constrained by financial limitations. This dual dynamic shows that effective subject selection guidance must be tailored to students' economic realities, highlighting the need for inclusive strategies that address both privilege and poverty in educational counseling.

4.6.5 Students' negligence

The findings from focus group discussion data revealed that students' negligence hindered teachers' ability to guide well students in subject combinations choices. Teachers in public secondary schools were not ready to deal with students' negligence as they only consider diligent students when providing guidance as far as advanced level subject combinations are concerned. One teacher in focus group discussion coded FGD2 discussed;

Teachers face difficulties in provision of effective guidance on students' subject selection. Teachers rely on students being proactive and engaged in their learning process so as to make informed decisions about their academic paths. Teachers cannot provide tailored advice in anything to the students who are negligent (FGD2, 13th May 2025).

Similarly, one of the head of school (HoS4) said that

Some students show little interest in their future careers or subject choices, making it hard for us to guide them effectively. When students are passive or negligent, even the best advice falls on deaf ears (Interview with HoS4, 13th May 2025). Additionally, DSEO commented this

Teachers struggle to guide students who are not engaged in their learning. Without student interest or initiative, it becomes difficult to provide meaningful and personalized academic advice" (Interview with DSEO, 13th May 2025).

The quotes imply that effective guidance on subject selection requires active student engagement and interest. When students are negligent or passive, teachers face challenges in offering meaningful support tailored to individual needs. This lack of student involvement undermines the guidance process and may lead to uninformed or unsuitable subject choices, ultimately affecting students' academic success and future careers. It highlights the importance of fostering student motivation and responsibility in decision-making. The findings indicate that students who do not receive proper

guidance during subject combinations selection are at a higher risk of encountering academic difficulties, which may lead to poor academic performance. When students are negligent or show little interest in their academic paths, it becomes challenging for teachers to offer meaningful and individualized guidance. As a result, these students may make inappropriate subject choices that do not align with their strengths, interests, or career aspirations.

This mismatch not only affects their academic success in the short term but may also have long-term consequences on their future educational and professional opportunities. Teachers, recognizing the lack of cooperation or interest from such students, often feel unmotivated and frustrated, which further reduces the effectiveness of their guidance efforts. The cycle of student negligence and teacher discouragement ultimately contribute to persistent academic underperformance and weak career preparation among students in public secondary schools. The findings are well supported by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the interaction between personal agency, environmental factors, and learning experiences in shaping career decisions. When students are negligent, they lack self-efficacy and fail to build outcome expectations necessary for informed subject selection.

This reduces their engagement in the guidance process. Teachers as part of the social environment also become less motivated and weakening their role in shaping students' academic paths. This reciprocal dynamic leads to poor subject choices and limited career development. These findings are supported by studies such as Bandura (2001), who emphasized that low self-efficacy among students limits their ability to engage in goal-setting and decision-making, leading to poor academic and career outcomes.

Similarly, Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) found that students who are disengaged or indifferent toward career planning often disregard guidance, resulting in inappropriate subject choices. Both studies affirm that student motivation and active participation are crucial for effective guidance and long-term academic and professional success. This study adds new knowledge by revealing how student negligence directly affects the effectiveness of teacher guidance in subject combination selection. It highlights a reciprocal relationship where disengaged students demotivate teachers, weakening the overall guidance process. Unlike previous research focused solely on teacher limitations or curriculum changes, this study emphasizes student behavior as a key barrier, offering a more holistic understanding of the factors influencing academic and career decision-making in Tanzanian secondary schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The general objective of this study sought to examine the perceived influence of teachers' guidance on students' choice of advanced level subject combinations in public secondary schools in Mbeya district council. Under this chapter, summary of study and main findings, conclusions, recommendations and area for the further studies are presented.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the perceived influence of teachers' guidance on students' choice of advanced level subject combinations in public secondary schools in Mbeya district council. Specifically, the study attempted to accomplish three research objectives: to examine the perceived role of teachers' guidance in influencing students' choice of advanced level subject combinations, explore students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when choosing advanced level subject combinations and identify the challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combinations selection. The study was guided by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT).

The study was guided by interpretivism paradigm which led to adoption of qualitative approach. Moreover, a multiple case study design was selected as research design. Interview and focus group discussion were employed as data collection methods. Data were obtained from teachers and heads of schools from public secondary schools.

Obtained data were thematically analyzed. Additionally, all ethical issues were observed and considered in this study.

5.3 Summary of the Main Findings

Summary of the findings obtained are presented below correspondingly to the research objectives;

5.3.1 The perceived role of teachers' guidance in influencing students' choice of advanced level subject combinations

The findings of the study showed that teachers in public secondary schools have a very critical role of providing guidance to the students as the way to influence students' choice of advanced level subject combinations. Teachers were perceived to be aware of various subject combinations that their students have to select when joining advanced level secondary education. Teachers used their knowledge and experience to guide students understand their interest, strength and abilities.

5.3.2 Students' perceptions of the guidance they receive from teachers when selecting advanced level subject combinations

The findings revealed that students in public secondary schools have demonstrated mixed perceptions of teachers' guidance they receive for the purpose of selecting advanced level subject combinations. Some students perceived their teachers' guidance negatively while others took them positively. It found that when teachers' guidance doesn't match with students' needs, interests, and aspirations, students do not value the given guidance and the vice versa is true.

5.3.3 The challenges faced by teachers in providing effective guidance to students during the subject combinations' selection

The findings revealed that despite teachers' provision of guidance in subject combinations selection in public secondary schools there were notable challenges observed. Teachers were faced with challenges when their guidance mismatched with students, imposing their own preferences, students' negligence as well as pressure from students' families. All of these difficulties made teachers fail to provide effective guidance of students' subject combination selections.

5.4 Conclusions

With reference to the findings obtained from three objectives as presented and discussed in chapter four, the following can be drawn as conclusions;

Based on the findings of objective one, it is concluded that teachers' huge role in guiding students was to provide information about different subject combinations and their requirements. Teachers were even facilitating subject combinations interest before guiding their students' selection. Thus, it is teacher's role to help students choose appropriate subject combinations which align with their abilities, interests as well as students' needs.

Based on the findings of objective two, it is concluded that nature of teachers' guidance provided to students mostly determine students' perceptions. It was observed that students in public secondary schools liked teachers to follow their career's aspirations paths when providing guidance. There will no longer be reliable outcomes if teachers swim to students' needs without considering their abilities, strength and weakness on

handling subject combinations. Additionally, it is better to receive bad students' perception to teachers' guidance only if the appropriate guidance is established.

Based on the findings of objective three, it is concluded that despite the efforts taken by teachers in public secondary schools in offering guidance to students on subject combinations selection, still the challenges are there which limit teachers' commitments. The challenges were divided into three groups: those caused by teachers themselves like imposing their own preferences in subject combinations selections, those caused by students themselves like their negligence as well as the family' socioeconomic background sometimes limit teachers' guidance in public secondary schools.

5.5 Recommendations for Actions

Regarding, the findings, discussions and conclusion drawn from this study, the study provide some recommendations in order to have a smooth teachers' guidance in public secondary schools, it is therefore recommended that;

- i. Teachers need to be critically when guiding students towards advanced level subject combinations selections without being influenced by personal bias and preferences on certain subject combinations.
- ii. Public secondary schools should design better guidance programs and teacher training workshops aimed at improving academic counseling on subject combinations selections.
- iii. The parents and students should be well advised on the importance of relying on teachers' guidance in order to avoid unnecessary inconveniences to students.

- iv. Teachers should not provide their guidance for purpose of pleasing their students but rather their guidance should have grounded from academic perspectives.
- v. If parents want to guide their children in subject combinations selection, they have to firstly consult the teachers in order to understand subject combinations that fit much their children.
- vi. Teachers in public secondary schools should develop an understanding on various subject combinations so as to provide effective guidance to the students.

5.6 Recommendation for Further Studies

The further researchers are recommended to conduct studies in the following areas;

The Perceived Factors Influencing Students Choice of Advanced Level Subject Combinations in Public Secondary Schools in Mbeya District Council.

- i. Teachers' views on students' perceptions on teachers' guidance towards selection of advanced level subject combinations in Mbeya District Council.
- ii. Parental awareness of teachers' guidance on students' subject combinations selection in Mbeya District Council.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guides for Head of Schools and DSEO



1. How is career and subject selection guidance organized in your school/district?
2. In what ways do teachers contribute to guiding students' selection on subject combinations?
3. Are there any formal structures in place for providing subject choice guidance (e.g., career days, counselling sessions)?
4. What kind of training or support do teachers receive to provide effective guidance?
5. How do you monitor or evaluate the effectiveness of teacher guidance on subject selection?
6. What challenges do you observe teachers facing in offering subject selection guidance?
7. Are there any resource limitations that affect guidance services (e.g., time, staff, training materials)?
8. What measures could improve the effectiveness of teachers' guidance?

Appendix II: Focus Group Discussion Guides for Teachers

1. What is your role in helping students to choose A-Level subject combinations?
2. What strategies do you use when guiding students on subject choices?
3. How often do students approach you for guidance?
4. How do students respond to the guidance you provide?
5. What feedback does students give about the usefulness of your advice?
6. What challenges do you face when offering guidance on students' subject selection?
7. Do you feel adequately trained and supported to provide career-related guidance?
8. What would help you offer better guidance?

Appendix III: Research Clearance Letter

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

Ref. No OUT/PG201900259 1st May 2025

Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS),
 Mbeya Region,
 P.O. Box.589,
MBEYA.

Dear Director,

RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE FOR MR. ALIKO MBUBA, REG NO: PG201900259

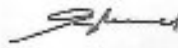
2. The Open University of Tanzania was established by an Act of Parliament No. 17 of 1992, which became operational on the 1st March 1993 by public notice No.55 in the official Gazette. The Act was however replaced by the Open University of Tanzania Charter of 2005, which became operational on 1st January 2007. In line with the Charter, the Open University of Tanzania mission is to generate and apply knowledge through research.

3. To facilitate and to simplify research process therefore, the act empowers the Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania to issue research clearance, on behalf of the Government of Tanzania and Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology, to both its staff and students who are doing research in Tanzania. With this brief background, the purpose of this letter is to introduce to you Mr. Aliko Mbuba, Reg.No: PG201900259, pursuing Master of Education In Administration Planning and Policy Studies (MEDAPPS). We hereby grant this clearance to conduct a research titled "Perceived Influence of Teachers' Guidance in Students Choice of Advanced Level Subject Combinations in Public Secondary Schools in Mbeya District Council". He will collect his data at your area from 5th May to 30th May 2025.

4. In case you need any further information, kindly do not hesitate to contact the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of the Open University of Tanzania, P.O.Box 23409, Dar es Salaam. Tel: 022-2-2668820. We lastly thank you in advance for your assumed cooperation and facilitation of this research academic activity.

Yours sincerely,

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA




Prof. Gwahula Raphael Kimamala

For: **VICE CHANCELLOR**

Appendix IV: Research Permit Letters

**THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

MBEYA REGION
Telegrams: "REGCOM"
Telephone: 025-2504045
Fax No: 025-2504243
E-mail: reg@mbeya.go.tz



OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONER,
P. O. BOX, 754,
MBEYA.

In reply please quote: 2 May 2025

Ref: DA.75/228/01/C

District Executive Director,
P. Box 599,
MBEYA.

**Re: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH CLEARANCE
FOR MR. ALIKO MBUBA**

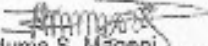
Reference is made to the captioned subject above.

2. The Regional Commissioner's Office received the letter with Ref. No. OUT/PG201900259 April, 2025 with the heading above.

3. The letter states that, Mr. Aliko Mbuba who is a bonafide student of the Open University of Tanzania who is at the moment required to conduct research has been granted a research clearance by the Vice Chancellor of Open University of Tanzania.

4. Therefore I am kindly introducing to you the above mentioned student to conduct a research titled "Perceive Influence of Teachers' Guidance in Students Choice of Advanced Level Subject Combinations in Public Secondary Schools" A case study of Mbeya District. The activity will be conducted from 05th – 30th May, 2025.

5. Please assist him accordingly


Kiduma S. Mageni

For: **REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY**
MBEYA

Copy:

- Vice Chancellor
OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA.
- Mr. Aliko Mbuba.



JAMHURI YA MUUNGANO WA TANZANIA
OFISI YA RAIS
TAWALA ZA MIKOA NA SERIKALI ZA MITAA
HALMASHAURI YA WILAYA YA MBEYA



Unapojibu tafadhali taja

Kumb.Na.MDC/S.10/8/103

06.05.2025

Wakuu wa Shule Wote
Halmashauri ya Wilaya ya Mbeya.

YAH: KIBALI CHA KUFANYA UTAFITI

Husika na kichwa cha habari hapo juu.

Ofisi imepokea barua ya tarehe **02.05.2025** kutoka Chuo Kikuu Huria cha Tanzania iliyohusu kibali cha kufanya utafiti.

Kwa barua hii, napenda kumtambulisha kwenu **Mr. Aliko Mbuba** kutoka chuo Kikuu Huria cha Tanzania kwa ajili ya kufanya utafiti kuhusu *"Perceived Influence of Teachers' Guidance in Students' choice of advanced Level Subject Combinations in Public Secondary Schools; A case study of Mbeya District Council"* kuanzia 05 May, 2025 hadi 30 May, 2025.

Tafadhali mpeni Ushirikiano.

Aliko Shola
Aliko Shola

Kny: Mkurugenzi Mtendaji (W)
MBEYA

KNY. MKURUGENZI MTENDAJI
HALMASHAURI YA WILAYA YA MBEYA

Nakala:

Mkurugenzi Mtendaji (W)
Halmashauri ya Wilaya ya Mbeya

- Aione kwenye jalada

Mr. Aliko Mbuba

Open University of Tanzania,
S.L.P 23409 ,
DAR ES SALAAM.