

Influence of Psychosocial Support Systems on Academic Performance among Adolescent Learners in Junior Schools in Makadara Sub-County, Nairobi County

By

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between types of psychosocial support systems provided to adolescent learners and academic performance in junior schools in Makadara Sub-County, Nairobi County. The research question that guided the study was: What types of psychosocial support systems are provided to adolescent learners in junior schools in Makadara Sub-County. Psychosocial Development Theory was used. The study adopted a mixed method approach specifically, convergent design with correlational research design for quantitative data and phenomenological design for qualitative data. Twenty-seven junior schools with 8559 learners, 458 teachers, 27 school counselors and 6,400 parents/guardians were targeted. The research utilized purposive sampling for the teacher counselors and parents, while simple random sampling was used for learners. The sample size was 442. Questionnaires and interview guides were used for data collection. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were examined thematically and through content analysis. Parental support exhibited a moderate positive correlation with academic performance ($r = 0.621$, $p < 0.05$), highlighting the importance of emotional guidance, monitoring, and encouragement at home. Despite these positive effects, the study identified notable gaps in the systematic provision of support. The study recommended strengthening school counseling and peer support programs to support adolescent learners' emotional well-being and academic performance.

Key Words: Psychological support system, Adolescent Learners, Junior schools, counseling services, Emotional support

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Background to the Problem

Psychosocial support systems refer to the integration of psychological and social interventions that promote the well-being of individuals, particularly adolescents undergoing

developmental transitions. During adolescence, learners experience significant physical, emotional, and social changes that influence their identity formation and behaviour (Santrock, 2021). Psychosocial support encompasses emotional, social, and mental assistance provided by parents, teachers, peers, and the wider community to help learners cope with academic and life challenges (Eccles & Roeser, 2021). Such support systems enhance self-esteem, resilience, and coping skills, which are essential for academic success (Wentzel, 2017). Therefore, psychosocial support systems in schools include parental involvement, peer interactions, and counselling services that collectively contribute to holistic learner development.

In developed countries such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, psychosocial support systems are well institutionalized within education systems. Schools integrate parental engagement, peer mentoring, and structured counselling programs to support learners' emotional and academic needs (Kidger et al., 2012). For instance, the American Psychological Association highlights that emotional well-being is closely linked to cognitive functioning, learning retention, and motivation. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, initiatives supported by the Education Endowment Foundation show that embedding emotional support within school programs can improve learning outcomes by 15–20% (EEF, 2021). These systems often adopt a whole-school approach that includes mental health literacy, emotional intelligence training, and peer support structures to enhance student engagement and performance (Durlak et al., 2021).

In African countries, psychosocial support systems are increasingly being integrated into education to address socio-economic and environmental challenges affecting learners. In South Africa, programs guided by the National School Safety Framework emphasize emotional well-being by addressing issues such as poverty, violence, and trauma, which significantly influence learning outcomes (Theron, 2022). Similarly, in Nigeria, parental involvement, peer influence, and teacher mentorship play critical roles in shaping students' academic performance, although the lack of professional counselling services remains a major gap (Adeniran, 2018; Obi, 2020). In Uganda and Tanzania, school-based psychosocial programs are often supported by community organizations and NGOs, although limited trained personnel constrain their effectiveness (Mutua & Ochieng, 2021). These examples highlight both progress and challenges in implementation.

In Kenya, psychosocial support systems have gained attention through education reforms such as the Competency-Based Curriculum, which emphasizes learners' emotional and social

well-being (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2022). Despite this progress, significant gaps remain in the provision of effective support systems in schools. Many junior schools lack qualified counsellors, limiting access to professional mental health services (Mutua & Ochieng, 2021). In urban areas such as Nairobi, learners face additional challenges including economic hardship, food insecurity, and exposure to unsafe environments, which heighten emotional distress (Njoroge, 2023). Furthermore, limited parental involvement and inadequate peer and teacher support structures exacerbate learning difficulties (Wainaina, 2019; Buzică, 2024). These challenges underscore the need to strengthen psychosocial support systems within Kenyan schools.

Statement of the Problem

Educational systems are expected to support learners not only academically but also psychologically through the provision of appropriate psychosocial support systems. These include parental support, peer support, and school-based interventions such as guidance and counselling, which collectively enhance learners' emotional well-being and academic engagement. Effective instruction, availability of learning resources, and supportive school environments are critical in ensuring that adolescent learners achieve required competencies in core subjects. However, this expectation has not been fully realized, particularly in urban public junior schools where a significant proportion of learners continue to underperform. Reports indicate that over 35% of learners fail to meet basic proficiency levels, with some sub-counties recording up to 40% not attaining expected competencies, pointing to gaps in both academic and psychosocial support systems.

These performance challenges are closely linked to the types and adequacy of psychosocial support systems available to learners, especially in urban informal settlements. Factors such as poverty, family instability, and exposure to violence negatively affect learners' emotional stability and academic participation, underscoring the need for structured support systems within schools. While stakeholders have made efforts to improve infrastructure and curriculum, limited attention has been given to strengthening psychosocial support mechanisms such as counseling services, peer programs, and parental involvement. Consequently, many learners remain disengaged and at risk of poor academic outcomes. Despite recognition of the importance of psychosocial support, there is limited empirical evidence on the specific types of support systems available in junior schools in Makadara Sub-County, which this study seeks to address.

Research Question

What are the types of psychosocial support systems provided to adolescent learners in junior schools in Makadara sub-county?

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Psychosocial Development Theory developed by Erik Erikson in 1968, which explains human development as a lifelong process shaped by social and psychological factors. Erikson proposed eight developmental stages, each characterized by a psychosocial crisis that individuals must resolve to achieve healthy development (Erikson, 1968). The fifth stage, identity versus role confusion, is particularly relevant to adolescents, who strive to develop a coherent sense of self. Successful resolution leads to emotional stability and purpose, while failure results in confusion and low self-esteem (Lund Dean & Jolly, 2022). The theory emphasizes the role of social relationships, suggesting that support systems such as family, peers, and schools are essential in shaping adolescents' psychosocial and academic outcomes.

One key strength of Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory is its comprehensive lifespan perspective, which explains development from infancy to adulthood (Dale & Sacks, 2005). This allows researchers to understand how earlier experiences influence later behaviors, including academic outcomes during adolescence. The theory strongly emphasizes social relationships, making it highly relevant to studies on psychosocial support systems such as parental involvement, peer interactions, and teacher mentorship (Mutua & Ochieng, 2021). Additionally, the theory is flexible and applicable across diverse cultural contexts, allowing it to be used in varied educational settings, including urban schools. Its widespread application in education, psychology, and counselling further enhances its credibility in explaining how psychosocial factors influence learning, motivation, and academic performance (Mitchell & Whitbourne, 2021).

Despite its strengths, Erikson's theory has several limitations. One major criticism is its rigid stage-based structure, which assumes that development occurs in a fixed and sequential order (Newman & Newman, 2022). In reality, human development is more dynamic, and individuals may not experience these stages uniformly. This limits the theory's ability to account for variations in adolescents' experiences across different social and cultural contexts. Additionally, the theory lacks detailed explanations of later developmental stages, making it less applicable to adult development (Welch, 1989). Another limitation is the insufficient empirical evidence supporting

the universality and timing of the stages, raising questions about its scientific validity (Jong, 2024). These weaknesses suggest the need for cautious application in contemporary educational research.

Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory is highly applicable to this study as it explains how different types of psychosocial support systems influence adolescent development and academic outcomes. During the identity versus role confusion stage, adolescents require support from parents, peers, and teachers to successfully navigate developmental challenges (Erikson, 1968). In the context of junior schools in Makadara Sub-County, psychosocial support systems such as parental involvement, peer support programs, and school-based counselling services provide emotional stability and guidance that enhance academic engagement. For instance, parental support fosters confidence, peer programs promote belonging, and counselling services help learners manage stress and anxiety (Njoroge, 2023). Therefore, the theory provides a strong foundation for examining how these support systems shape both the well-being and academic performance of adolescent learners.

Review of Related Empirical Literature

Schwab and Seifert (2020) conducted a quantitative longitudinal study in Germany to examine the effectiveness of school-based psychosocial support programs on learners' academic motivation and engagement. Using standardized questionnaires among learners aged 12–15 in 15 urban secondary schools, and applying structural equation modeling, the study found that interventions such as stress management and teacher-student rapport improved motivation, attendance, and peer relationships. However, the study did not directly measure academic performance using grades or test scores. Additionally, it was conducted in well-resourced urban schools with established mental health systems, unlike under-resourced contexts. This creates a gap in understanding whether similar psychosocial support systems directly influence measurable academic performance among adolescents in resource-constrained settings such as Makadara Sub-County (Schwab & Seifert, 2020).

Kataoka, Stein, and Jaycox (2018) conducted a randomized controlled trial in the United States to evaluate the impact of school-based trauma interventions on adolescent learners exposed to violence. The study involved learners aged 11–14 and used academic test scores, behavioral checklists, and trauma symptom questionnaires, analyzed through ANOVA and regression techniques. Findings indicated significant improvements in test scores, classroom behavior, and participation following group counseling and emotional regulation training. Despite its

methodological rigor, the study focused largely on emotional and behavioral outcomes, with limited exploration of broader academic indicators such as long-term retention and teacher-based assessments. This presents a methodological gap, as comprehensive academic performance measures were not fully examined, which this study seeks to address in the context of junior schools in Makadara Sub-County (Kataoka et al., 2018).

Okello (2020) explored the role of school-based counseling programs on adolescents' emotional well-being in Ugandan secondary schools using a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions, revealing that individual counseling, group therapy, and crisis intervention significantly supported learners' emotional stability. However, challenges such as lack of trained personnel, stigma, and limited privacy were identified. While the study provided valuable insights into psychosocial support practices, it did not examine their direct influence on academic performance. This creates a conceptual gap between emotional well-being and academic outcomes, particularly for younger adolescents in junior schools. The current study addresses this gap by examining both the availability of psychosocial support systems and their direct relationship with academic performance in Makadara Sub-County (Okello, 2020).

Mwangi and Wanjiru (2021) investigated the impact of peer mentoring on adolescents' psychosocial well-being in Murang'a County, Kenya, using a mixed-methods approach involving questionnaires and interviews. The study, focusing on Form Three learners aged 16–18, found that peer mentoring reduced feelings of isolation, enhanced school belonging, and improved behavior. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. However, the study did not establish a direct link between peer mentoring and academic performance, nor did it focus on younger adolescents in junior schools. This creates both a contextual and age-related gap, as the effectiveness of peer support among learners aged 12–14 remains underexplored, particularly in urban settings such as Makadara Sub-County (Mwangi & Wanjiru, 2021).

Mugisha (2022) conducted a quasi-experimental study in Rwanda to assess the effect of life skills education on students' resilience and school engagement. Using pre-test and post-test designs with standardized questionnaires, and analyzing data through paired t-tests and regression, the study found that life skills training significantly improved coping skills and school attendance. However, the study did not include direct measures of academic performance such as grades or

examination scores. Additionally, it did not focus on urban school environments characterized by challenges such as overcrowding and socio-economic inequalities. This limits the generalizability of findings to contexts like Nairobi. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining whether similar psychosocial interventions influence measurable academic performance in urban junior schools (Mugisha, 2022).

Abdulahi and Yusuf (2020) examined the role of parental involvement in psychosocial support among adolescent Somali refugees in Dadaab camps, Kenya, using a descriptive survey design. Data were collected through questionnaires and key informant interviews, and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings showed that parental emotional and material support helped reduce trauma and improve school continuity. However, the study was conducted in a humanitarian context, limiting its applicability to formal urban school settings. Furthermore, it relied mainly on descriptive statistics, without using inferential analysis to establish relationships between variables. This creates both contextual and methodological gaps, which the current study addresses by applying correlation and regression analyses to examine the influence of parental support on academic performance in Makadara Sub-County (Abdulahi & Yusuf, 2020).

Chikondi (2021) conducted a qualitative ethnographic study in Malawi to explore the effectiveness of community-based psychosocial support programs among adolescents. Using participant observation and in-depth interviews, the study found that community volunteers played a significant role in improving student morale and school retention. However, the study did not incorporate quantitative methods or statistical analysis to measure academic outcomes objectively. Additionally, it focused on community-based rather than school-based interventions, limiting its relevance to formal education systems. This methodological and contextual limitation creates a gap in understanding the measurable impact of structured school-based psychosocial support systems on academic performance. The current study addresses this gap by integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches within junior school settings in Makadara Sub-County (Chikondi, 2021).

Research Design and Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods convergent research design, which enabled the simultaneous collection and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance the validity and depth of understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The quantitative strand employed a correlational design, appropriate for examining the relationship

between types of psychosocial support systems provided to adolescent learners and their academic performance. Concurrently, the qualitative strand utilized a phenomenological design to explore participants' lived experiences and provide deeper perceptions into how these psychosocial support systems influence academic outcomes. The integration of both strands facilitated methodological triangulation, thereby improving the reliability and credibility of the study findings.

The study targeted a population comprising 27 public junior schools, 8,559 learners, 458 teachers, 27 teacher counselors, and 6,400 parents/guardians in Makadara Sub-County (Nairobi County Government, 2023). Stratified random sampling was used to select 10 junior schools to ensure representation across different strata. From these schools, 382 learners were selected using systematic sampling to achieve proportional representation by class and gender. Additionally, 30 teachers were sampled using Yamane's (1967) formula with proportionate allocation to ensure gender balance. A total of 15 teacher counselors and parents/guardians were selected through purposive sampling due to their critical roles in providing psychosocial support, thereby offering rich contextual insights into institutional and home-based support systems.

Data collection employed multiple instruments aligned to both research strands. A structured questionnaire was administered to learners to capture quantitative data on patterns and types of psychosocial support systems (Toyon, 2021). Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers, teacher counselors, and parents/guardians to explore in-depth perspectives on psychosocial support and its influence on academic performance (Råslin et al., 2022). In addition, document analysis was conducted to review school records related to psychosocial support services, while observation checklists were used to capture observable indicators of psychosocial support within school environments (O'Leary, 2023). This multi-instrument approach enhanced data richness and supported triangulation.

Data analysis followed both quantitative and qualitative procedures. Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 26, generating descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, as well as inferential statistics including correlational analysis and regression analysis to determine the extent to which psychosocial support systems influence academic performance (Creswell, 2022). Qualitative data from interviews, documents, and observations were analyzed thematically through transcription, coding, and theme development to identify recurring patterns aligned with the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). The

integration of findings at the interpretation stage provided a comprehensive understanding of how psychosocial support systems influence the academic performance of adolescent learners.

Findings and Discussions

The focus of the study was to identify the different types of psychosocial support available to adolescent learners in junior schools in Makadara sub-county and the possible correlation of such support to academic performance. The emotional well-being of the learners, psychosocial support, and resilience, as well as the ability to tackle academic and personal challenges, are interrelated. Thus, the study sought to determine the presence of school counseling, supportive teachers, peer support, mentorship, and parental involvement. A total of 376 learners participated in the study, and their responses were measured using a Likert scale consisting of five levels. The outcomes are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Learners' Responses on the Types of Psychosocial Support (n=376)

Types of Psychosocial Support	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
I receive regular guidance and counseling services in school.	91 (24.2%)	150 (39.9%)	65 (17.3%)	40 (10.6%)	30 (8.0%)	3.62	1.23
There are teachers I can talk to when I have personal problems.	101 (26.9%)	160 (42.6%)	55 (14.6%)	35 (9.3%)	25 (6.6%)	3.74	1.18
School invites professionals (e.g., psychologists, social workers).	66 (17.5%)	110 (29.3%)	80 (21.3%)	70 (18.6%)	50 (13.3%)	3.19	1.27
Peer support groups or clubs are available in my school.	81 (21.5%)	140 (37.2%)	70 (18.6%)	45 (12.0%)	40 (10.6%)	3.48	1.26
I receive support from teachers when I feel stressed or anxious.	96 (25.5%)	170 (45.2%)	60 (16.0%)	30 (8.0%)	20 (5.3%)	3.78	1.10
There are awareness sessions on mental health in our school.	71 (18.9%)	110 (29.3%)	75 (19.9%)	65 (17.3%)	55 (14.6%)	3.21	1.30
My school offers mentorship programs for learners.	96 (25.5%)	135 (35.9%)	65 (17.3%)	45 (12.0%)	35 (9.3%)	3.56	1.23
I feel emotionally safe and supported within the school environment.	121 (32.2%)	155 (41.2%)	55 (14.6%)	25 (6.6%)	20 (5.3%)	3.89	1.09
The school includes parents or guardians in offering support to learners.	86 (22.9%)	120 (31.9%)	80 (21.3%)	50 (13.3%)	40 (10.6%)	3.43	1.24
I am encouraged to talk about my feelings when I am having a hard time.	111 (29.5%)	150 (39.9%)	60 (16.0%)	30 (8.0%)	25 (6.6%)	3.78	1.16

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

Findings presented in Table 11 indicate that a significant proportion of learners benefit from various psychosocial support systems in their schools, although the levels of availability and

consistency differ across areas of support. Majority, 150 (39.9%) of learner participants agreed and 91 (24.2%) strongly agreed that they receive regular guidance and counseling services ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.23$). Despite this, a minority 40 (10.6%) of participants disagreed, with 30 (8.0%) strongly disagreeing and 65 (17.3%) opting for neutrality. This implies that although counseling services are available, there are still differences in their consistency and accessibility among schools. These results are consistent with Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, which highlights the need of social support in assisting teenagers in overcoming identity-related obstacles. Counseling services offer emotional assistance that promotes academic engagement and identity construction. However, some learners may not be able to fully benefit due to inconsistent access. However, inconsistencies in access may hinder some learners from fully benefiting. This is supported by UNICEF (2021), which emphasizes that structured psychosocial support programs enhance adolescents' well-being and learning outcomes when consistently implemented.

In like manner, most learners affirmed being able to communicate with teachers about private matters, with 160 (42.6%) respondents agreeing, as 101 (26.9%) respondents articulated a strong agreement ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.18$). Only 9.3% respondents articulated a disagreement and 6.6% articulated a strong disagreement. According to Social Learning Theory, these kinds of interactions enable learners to see and absorb coping mechanisms that teachers' model, which has a favorable influence on behavior and academic achievement. Through their everyday interactions, teachers serve as role models and reinforce adaptive behaviors. These findings are consistent with Schwab and Seifert (2020), who found that teacher support enhances student engagement and emotional resilience. Therefore, strengthening teacher capacity in mentorship and emotional support is essential for sustaining positive psychosocial outcomes among learners.

When analyzing feedback concerning the involvement of school psychologists, the social workers, and external professionals, the responses were divided: 110 (29.3%) of the respondents agreed, 66 (17.5%) of the participants strongly agreed, and a large number 70 (18.6%) responded disagreed, 50 (13.3%) strongly disagreed, and 80 (21.3%) were neutral ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.27$). Psychosocial Development Theory states that in order for teenagers to successfully negotiate developmental problems, they need a variety of support systems, and the depth of intervention may be limited in the absence of professional experience. While peers and teachers can offer basic support, complicated psychological difficulties frequently call more specialist attention. This finding aligns with Okello (2020), who noted that inadequate counseling personnel in schools

limits the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions. Addressing this gap is critical for ensuring comprehensive support systems that cater to learners' varied emotional and psychological needs.

On peer support groups, 140 (37.2%) agreed and 81 (21.5%) strongly agreed, while 45 (12.0%) disagreed and 40 (10.6%) strongly disagreed, with 70 (18.6%) neutral ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.26$). These findings revealed that peer groups are present within the sample schools, but their existence was not uniform across all schools which constitutes a meaningful gap considering the importance of peers in the psychosocial development of adolescents. According to Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that people pick up habits by watching and copying their peers, social relationships are essential to teenage growth. Collaboration, emotional expression, and intellectual engagement are all encouraged in supportive peer environments. However, peer support networks' full usefulness is constrained by their uneven availability. This finding is supported by Mwangi and Wanjiru (2021), who found that peer mentoring enhances psychosocial well-being and school engagement. Therefore, schools need to institutionalize peer support initiatives to ensure all learners benefit from collaborative learning and emotional support networks.

As for teacher support in relation to stress and anxiety, 170 (45.2%) participants expressed agreement and 96 (25.5%) participants expressed strong agreement ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.10$). 8.0% expressed disagreement and another 5.3% expressed strong disagreement. This illustrates how valuable the role of a teacher is, in fostering an emotionally supportive space in the classroom. This is consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of requirements, which holds that before learners can succeed academically, their psychological and safety requirements must be met. Learners are better able to concentrate and achieve academically when teachers provide safe and encouraging environments. These findings are consistent with Kataoka et al. (2018), who demonstrated that school-based psychosocial interventions improve both emotional well-being and academic outcomes. Thus, strengthening teacher capacity in emotional support and classroom management is essential for enhancing both learner well-being and academic performance.

Out of the total participants, 110 (29.3%) expressed agreement and 71 (18.9%) expressed strong agreement for mental health awareness sessions. Sixty-five, 65 (17.3%) participants expressed disagreement for mental health awareness sessions and 55 (14.6%) expressed strong disagreement ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.30$). There was also a reflection of mental health promotion programs inconsistency. According to Erik Erikson's theory, awareness programs are essential for assisting teenagers in comprehending and resolving identity-related issues. Learners' capacity to

build coping mechanisms and resilience is hampered by inconsistent exposure. This finding is supported by World Health Organization (2021), which highlights the importance of continuous mental health promotion in supporting adolescent development and academic success. Therefore, schools should institutionalize regular mental health awareness initiatives to ensure continuous support for learners' psychosocial development.

In a similar vein, there was moderate accessibility to mentorship programs, with 135 (35.9%) respondents agreeing, and 96 (25.5%) strongly agreeing ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.23$). On the other hand, 45 (12.0%) disagreed and 35 (9.3%) respondents strongly disagreed. As learners take on the attitudes and behaviors of mentors, mentoring offers advice and role modeling, which is essential to Social Learning Theory. These programs improve academic concentration, emotional stability, and decision-making. This finding is consistent with Mugisha (2022), who found that life skills and mentorship-related interventions improve student engagement and resilience. However, variability in access suggests the need for more structured and inclusive mentorship programs to ensure all learners benefit equally from these support systems.

The majority of learner participants indicated that they feel emotionally safe in the school setting, with 155 (41.2%) respondents agreeing and 121 (32.2%) strongly agreeing ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.09$). Only a small number (11.9%) disagree or strongly disagree. Higher-level learning and success require emotional safety, according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Learners are more likely to participate fully in academic activities when they feel safe. This is supported by Chikondi (2021), who found that supportive psychosocial environments improve learner retention and participation. Thus, maintaining and strengthening emotionally safe environments is critical for sustaining positive academic outcomes.

Most respondents had a neutral to positive position on the level of involvement parents have in support programs, with ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.24$) 120 (31.9%) participants agreeing, 86 (22.9%) participants strongly agreeing, and 40 (10.6%) participants strongly disagreeing, while 50 (13.3%) participants disagreed. The moderate level of parental participation ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.24$) indicates that although some parents actively assist their children, others are still less involved. According to Psychosocial Development Theory, teenagers' identities and emotional stability are greatly influenced by their families. This support system may be weakened by low parental participation. This finding aligns with Abdulahi and Yusuf (2020), who found that parental psychosocial support significantly enhances learners' well-being and school participation.

Therefore, enhancing school-parent collaboration is essential for strengthening psychosocial support systems and improving learner outcomes.

Document analysis showed that although counseling programs and mentorship initiatives were mentioned in school documents, their execution was frequently erratic and lacked organized oversight. The quantitative results, which indicated a moderate availability of these services, are both supported and contradicted by this discovery. According to Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, teenagers' capacity to successfully resolve identity conflicts may be hampered by inconsistent assistance. Learners may experience emotional instability and academic disengagement in the absence of ongoing support. This result is in line with (Eccles & Roeser, 2021), who stress that in order to promote teenage development, schools must offer stable developmental environments. As a result, although programs exist in theory, their efficacy in fostering academic and psychological results is limited by their uneven execution.

Additional document analysis revealed that family engagement programs and mental health awareness campaigns were poorly documented and used unevenly within schools. The quantitative results, which indicated moderate amounts of such support, are at odds with this. Unmet psychological and belonging needs can have a detrimental influence on learners' motivation and academic focus, according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The wellbeing of learners may be jeopardized by inadequate record-keeping, which indicates a lack of institutional commitment. This finding is corroborated by (Njoroge, 2023), who emphasizes that urban learners have psychosocial difficulties that call for organized and reliable support networks. To guarantee that psychological interventions successfully meet the requirements of learners, policy implementation and documentation must be strengthened.

Observation data showed that some schools lacked sufficient facilities and well-organized processes, while others had obvious psychosocial support mechanisms like counseling rooms, peer group activities, and mentorship programs. This draws attention to implementation discrepancies while providing some support for the quantitative findings. According to Social Learning Theory, learners can see and emulate positive behaviors when they are in supportive contexts. However, there are few opportunities for social learning in schools without such systems. This result is consistent with (Adeniran, 2018), who highlights how environmental influences influence learners' social and academic behaviors. Therefore, improving learner outcomes requires making psychological support systems more structurally and physically accessible.

Teachers are crucial in providing psychosocial support, frequently serving as mentors and unofficial counsellors, according to findings from teacher interviews. Teachers stated that they frequently recognise learners who are having emotional or behavioural difficulties and, if professional counsellors are available, offer them support. In order to improve learners' resilience, emotional control, and decision-making skills, they also stressed the incorporation of life skills education into classroom instruction. One of the teachers (MSCJST 8) asserted that “this validates the quantitative results showing high levels of teacher participation in psychological assistance.” Teachers also pointed out that (MSCJST 4, 6, 9, & 11), “despite our lack of specialised training, we frequently fill this gap because there are few professional counselling options available, demonstrating both structural difficulties and commitment to providing adequate psychosocial assistance.”

During the interviews with the teachers, one of them observed:

We provide guidance and mentorship to learners, especially those who appear withdrawn or distressed, and we refer them to the counsellor when necessary. Teaching life skills helps learners manage emotions, make decisions, and cope with challenges. There is need to emphasise the dependence on teachers as the main source of support in schools and complement the significance of teacher assistance in psychological development (MSCJST 12 Personal Communication, March 26, 2026).

Psychosocial support is mostly provided through structured programs including individual and group therapy sessions, according to interviews with school counselors. Counselors reported dealing with problems like academic stress, peer pressure, family difficulties, and self-esteem. They also emphasized how awareness campaigns may lessen stigma and motivate students to seek assistance. Effective psychological support was found to depend on cooperation between educators and parents. However, counselors pointed out issues that make it difficult to provide services consistently, such as high student-to-counselor ratios and scarce resources. By offering more in-depth understanding of the operational difficulties impacting psychosocial support services, these findings supplement the quantitative data.

One of the counsellors noted:

Learners frequently come to discuss personal challenges, and we create a safe space for them to express themselves and develop coping strategies. Mental health awareness programs help reduce stigma and encourage learners to seek support when needed. We have to emphasise the value of counselling services while also highlighting the need for increased resources and capability (MSCC 5, Personal Communication, March 27, 2026).

Although they expressed differing degrees of involvement, parents and guardians recognized the need of psychosocial assistance. While some acknowledged limited involvement because of employment and financial constraints, many reported offering emotional support through communication and encouragement. Additionally, several parents believed that schools should be the primary providers of psychosocial support. These results are consistent with quantitative data that indicate moderate parental involvement. Parents also mentioned that in certain situations, working with school counselors had helped with emotional and behavioral problems. Nonetheless, the general lack of consistency in parental involvement points to the necessity of raising awareness and using organized involvement tactics to improve home-school relationships. "We try to talk to our children about school and listen when they are stressed so they can share their problems," said one parent. "Working with school counsellors has helped us manage some of the behavioural challenges our children face," said a different parent. These answers stress the importance of parental support while emphasising the need for improved family-school cooperation.

The most important insight was that psychosocial support for teenagers in Makadara sub-county is comprehensive in that it integrates teacher mentorship, professional counseling, and parent support. There were still gaps in understanding, consistency, and collaboration among the stakeholders. Improved partnerships among schools, parents, and the community are essential for the emotional and overall development of junior learners.

Conclusion

The study finds that junior schools in Makadara Sub-County have a variety of psychological support systems, while their availability and consistency vary. These systems include peer programs, mentorship, guidance and counseling, teacher assistance, and family participation. While peer and mentorship programs help learners' social growth, teachers are

crucial in both emotional and academic support. However, there are deficiencies in parental involvement, mental health program uniformity, and the participation of outside experts. These discrepancies make it more difficult for psychosocial support networks to adequately meet the developmental requirements of teenagers, which has an influence on their general wellbeing and academic achievement.

Recommendations

The study suggests that regular counseling services, mental health awareness programs, and organized peer support initiatives be institutionalized in schools to improve the implementation and consistency of psychosocial support systems. To improve professional support, the Ministry of Education should make sure that all junior schools have qualified counselors on staff. Teachers should also have access to capacity-building programs that teach them the fundamentals of counseling and mentoring. In order to strengthen support at home, schools should also improve cooperation with parents through awareness campaigns and active engagement techniques. Finally, to guarantee that psychosocial support services are successfully implemented and available to all students, investments in infrastructure and policy monitoring are required.

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