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Relationship Between Parental Academic Support and Psychological Well-Being Among Adolescent Learners in Public Junior Schools in Kiambu Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between parental academic support and psychological well-being among adolescent learners in public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County, Kenya. The study's research question was: What is the relationship between parental academic support and the psychological well-being of adolescent learners in public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County? The study was guided by the Theory of Psychological Well-being by Carol Ryff. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design was adopted, involving the collection of quantitative data through questionnaires and qualitative data through interview guides, FGDs, and document analysis. The target population comprised 21 public junior schools, 6,294 learners, 122 teachers, and 63 parents. Stratified random sampling was used to select six schools, while simple random sampling was used to select 362 learners and 36 teachers. Purposive sampling was applied to select 18 parents for interviews. Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires, the Carol Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale, interview guides, and document analysis guides. Instrument validity was established through expert review and pilot testing, while reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis, whereas qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented through narrative descriptions and verbatim quotations. The study found that parental engagement significantly influenced adolescent learners' psychological well-being, with academic support showing the strongest relationship ($r = .730$, $p = .000$). Emotional support, role modelling, and school participation also contributed positively. The study concluded that consistent parental engagement, which includes the provision of academic support by parents, enhances confidence, resilience, motivation, and belonging. This study recommends stronger parent-school partnerships and supportive parenting practices to promote learners' well-being.

Key Words: Parental Engagement; Parental Academic Support; Emotional Support; Parental Role Modelling; Parental Participation in School Activities; and Psychological Well-Being

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Background to the Study

Parental academic support refers to parents' deliberate engagement to enhance the learner's educational experiences through academic encouragement, helping with schoolwork, tracking progress, supplying learning resources, and communicating educational expectations. However, parental support is not only limited to academic assistance but also includes creating a safe environment that makes adolescents feel valued, guided, and motivated toward educational goals. Psychological well-being refers to the positive psychological functioning of an individual, which includes self-acceptance, emotional regulation, positive interpersonal relations, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). Psychological well-being is an important factor for adolescent learners as it affects their ability to cope with academic demands, develop resilience, establish healthy relationships, and achieve personal and educational goals. Thus, adolescence is an important developmental period during which supportive family environments are needed.

International stakeholders recognize parental engagement as a key factor in children's educational success and psychological development. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) highlights that adolescent mental well-being allows young people to cope with life challenges, develop their abilities, learn well, and participate positively in society. UNICEF similarly states that "supportive family environments provide children with emotional security, protection and opportunities for healthy development". UNESCO promotes partnerships between families, schools and communities as key mechanisms to improve educational outcomes and to foster the holistic development of the learner. The Ministry of Education in Kenya has identified parental engagement as a key component of competency-based education (CBE), with parents expected to work with schools to support the academic and social development of learners (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Studies worldwide have demonstrated that parental academic support is an important factor in adolescents' educational adjustment and psychological well-being. Adolescents who have reliable parental help and engagement generally display greater self-esteem, motivation, emotional stability, and skills to deal with academic and social problems. But the way parents help their children changes in different societies. It is contingent upon their cultural values, how much money they have, how their families are set up, and their education systems. Some parents offer direct academic support, while others support learners through encouragement, communication, and emotional availability. Parental engagement is acknowledged globally, yet effective engagement is hindered by challenges such as limited parental time, evolving family structures, and unequal access to educational resources. It is thus still relevant to explore parental academic support in specific educational contexts to better understand its role in adolescent psychological well-being.

Research in developed countries suggests that positive family relationships promote the psychological health of adolescents. In Spain, Viejo et al. (2018) investigated psychological well-being in adolescents and found that supportive social environments influenced adolescents' capacity to cope with developmental challenges and experience positive adjustment. The study emphasized that adolescents need relationships that offer emotional safety, guidance, and opportunities for personal growth. Although in the Spanish education system there are more solid

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institutional support structures than in many developing contexts, the findings show that family relationships continue to be a key factor in the well-being of adolescents. However, socio-economic environments, cultural expectations, and educational structures differ, and findings among developed countries may not explain the experiences of adolescents in developing contexts such as Kenya.

Studies in developed countries, including the United States, have also found that parental engagement in education affects adolescents' academic confidence and psychological outcomes. Research has demonstrated that when parents communicate their educational expectations, monitor their children's academic progress, and provide encouragement, they support learners' motivation, emotional adjustment, and sense of competence. However, current issues such as parental work requirements, family composition, and differential parental ability to support learning continue to impact the quality of engagement. The results indicate that parental academic support is not only about being present, but also about the quality, consistency, and responsiveness of their engagement. Therefore, education systems are more and more preoccupied with strengthening home-school linkages so that parental engagement can positively influence the academic and psychological development of learners.

In Africa, parental support has been recognized as an important protective factor in promoting the psychological well-being of adolescents. León-Himmelstine et al. (2021) studied the mental health and psychosocial well-being of adolescents in Tanzania and found that family relationships played an important role in adolescents' emotional experiences. The study found that supportive family environments increased adolescents' sense of security, whereas dysfunctional family interactions led to stress and psychological problems. The findings show that parental engagement is not only limited to the provision of material resources, but also includes emotional availability, guidance, and positive role modeling. The study, however, also highlighted the challenges of family instability and limited psychosocial support systems, indicating the need for future research on specific parental practices that foster adolescent well-being in the African educational context.

There is increasing evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa that parental engagement is increasingly being identified as a key component of interventions to improve adolescent mental health and educational outcomes. In a review of interventions to improve adolescent psychological well-being in 15 African countries, Mabrouk et al. (2022) reported that family and school-based support mechanisms help improve coping skills and reduce psychological challenges like anxiety and depression. The review pointed out that adolescents are helped by positive relationships that foster resilience and emotional regulation. However, many African communities face barriers to meaningful parental engagement, including poverty, parents' workloads, limited educational resources, and inadequate communication between schools and families. Thus, context-specific research is still required to understand the impact of parental academic support on the psychological well-being of adolescents in African schools.

Adolescent psychological health is an increasing concern in Kenya, with emerging challenges of academic pressure, family relationships, and mental health. The Kenya National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (Ministry of Health, 2022) shows that a significant percentage of adolescents have mental health problems and family issues are a major source of psychological

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distress. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2023) found that higher levels of support from family, peers, and schools in adolescents were associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression symptoms. These findings suggest that parental support is an important basis for adolescents' emotional adjustment and academic confidence. However, most Kenyan studies have concentrated on general social support and mental health outcomes, with less focus on specific types of parental engagement, like parental academic support, and their link to the psychological well-being of junior school learners.

The Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) has increased the focus on parental engagement in Kiambu County, which requires parents, teachers, and schools to collaborate in fostering the holistic development of the learners. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD, 2019) recognizes parents and caregivers as important partners in children's educational growth through the provision of guidance, encouragement, and support. However, this policy emphasis does not preclude the possibility that parental academic support may be affected by challenges such as changing family structures, parental workload, and differences in socioeconomic status. Public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County are catering for learners in early adolescence. There is scanty empirical evidence on the role of parental academic support on psychological well-being. It is important to understand this relationship because learners at this stage are faced with increased academic demands, identity formation, and emotional changes that require consistent support from parents.

Prior research has shown the effects of parental engagement on adolescents' adjustment and psychological well-being, yet there are important gaps. Previous studies have largely focused on parental engagement in relation to academic achievement, general mental health, or behavioral outcomes and have not examined parental academic support in isolation as a specific contributor to psychological well-being. Moreover, the results from studies carried out in developed countries may not fully reflect the social, cultural and educational realities of Kenyan public junior schools. Kenyan studies have pointed out the importance of family support; however, scanty attention has been paid to learners in Kiambu Sub-County. This gap is what this study therefore sought to fill by investigating the association between parental academic support and the psychological well-being of adolescent learners in public Junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Stakeholders in Kiambu Sub-County, including school administrators, guidance and counselling teachers, and local education officers, have raised concerns about the increasing cases of stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem among adolescent learners. WHO (2020) indicates that 10%-20% of adolescents experience psychological challenges, and Kenya's Mental Health Policy (2015–2030) emphasizes that 10% -15% of adolescents are challenged psychologically. The Kiambu Sub-County Education Office (2024) indicated that while schools have put in place programs to support academic and emotional needs, gaps remain in the role of parents in fostering psychological well-being. Ideally, parents' engagement in their children's academic journey, providing consistent emotional support, serving as positive role models, and participating in school activities is crucial. Parental engagement has been linked to improved psychological outcomes, greater resilience, and better academic performance among adolescents. However, in Kiambu Sub-

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County, schools reflect inconsistencies in parental engagement, with parents either unwilling or unable to provide adolescents with academic support, emotional support, role modelling, minimally participating in school activities, and communicating less frequently with teachers. Consequently, adolescents exhibit lack of motivation, poor emotional regulation, withdrawal, and lack of motivation (Kiambu Sub-County Education Office, 2024).

Previous studies (Maloney et al., 2024; Mbithi et al., 2023; Stanford, 2023; Wanjiru, 2025; Kanyoi & Kirimi, 2025; Nakimuli & Kyomukama, 2024) have concluded that adolescents' psychological well-being is significantly influenced by parental engagement. However, these studies have focused on academic achievement or general mental health without isolating the influence of academic support on adolescents' psychological well-being, particularly within the unique socio-cultural and economic background of public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County. Adolescents in the area risk facing persistent psychological challenges, which may negatively affect their academic success, social relationships, and future life outcomes. This study sought to examine how academic support as a form of parental engagement impacts the psychological well-being of adolescents in public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County, Kenya.

Research Question

What is the relationship between parental academic support and the psychological well-being of adolescent learners in public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County?

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by **Ryff's Theory of Psychological Well-Being** developed by Carol D. Ryff (1989). The theory adopts a eudaimonic perspective, emphasizing that psychological well-being involves achieving positive psychological functioning, personal growth, and meaningful engagement with life rather than simply experiencing happiness. The theory identifies six dimensions of well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These dimensions provide a comprehensive understanding of how individuals develop resilience, competence, and emotional stability. In this study, the theory was used to explain how parental academic support influences adolescent learners' psychological well-being by shaping their confidence, motivation, coping abilities, and relationships within school and family environments (Ryff, 1989).

A major strength of Ryff's Theory of Psychological Well-Being is its comprehensive explanation of psychological functioning through multiple interconnected dimensions. Unlike approaches that focus only on happiness or the absence of psychological problems, the theory emphasizes positive development, meaningful relationships, personal competence, and achievement of life goals. This makes it suitable for studying adolescents because this developmental stage involves identity formation, increased academic expectations, and emotional changes requiring supportive environments. Research has shown that supportive relationships and positive social environments contribute to resilience, self-esteem, and effective coping among young people (Dierendonck et al., 2023). Therefore, the theory provides an appropriate foundation for examining how parental academic support contributes to learners' psychological development.

Despite its strengths, Ryff's Theory of Psychological Well-Being has some limitations. The theory was initially developed from adult psychological perspectives, and some dimensions,

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such as autonomy and purpose in life, may require contextual interpretation when applied to adolescent learners. Additionally, the theory focuses mainly on individual psychological functioning and gives limited attention to external factors such as socioeconomic conditions, family circumstances, and school environments that influence adolescents' experiences. For learners in public junior schools, factors such as parental education, financial capacity, and availability of learning resources may affect the extent to which parental academic support improves psychological well-being. Therefore, applying the theory requires consideration of cultural and contextual factors affecting adolescent development (Ryff, 1989).

In this study, Ryff's Theory of Psychological Well-Being guided the examination of the relationship between parental academic support and psychological well-being among adolescent learners in public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County. The theory explains that supportive environments contribute to positive psychological functioning. Parental academic encouragement, assistance with learning activities, and monitoring of academic progress may enhance learners' environmental mastery by improving confidence in managing academic responsibilities. Similarly, parental guidance and emotional support may strengthen positive relationships, self-acceptance, personal growth, and purpose in life. Thus, the theory provided a suitable framework for understanding how parental academic support contributes to learners' psychological well-being and academic adjustment (Ryff, 1989).

Review of Related Empirical Literature

A longitudinal study by Johnson and Smith (2023) in the United States sought to tackle the issue of increasing adolescent mental health problems and decreasing parental engagement in academic affairs. The study was carried out in several school districts in urban and suburban areas with adolescent populations aged 12-16 years, using stratified random sampling to select 1,200 learners. The study's approach was mixed-methods and used a questionnaire to measure levels of academic support, while outcomes of mental health were assessed using the standardized Youth Self-Report (YSR). The findings showed a statistically significant relationship between parents' academic support and depression and anxiety levels among adolescents. The study further established that parents' engagement in school activities positively impacted adolescents' psychological distress; hence, it recommended that parental engagement programs should be well-structured and incorporated into school strategies on psychological well-being. The study presented a contextual gap as it was conducted in the United States, whose educational, socio-cultural, and family contexts differ from those of Kenya, whereas the current study provided context-specific evidence from public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County, Kenya,

Li and Zhang (2023) looked into parental academic pressure and its effect on adolescent psychological adjustment in urban China. The population comprised middle school learners in Beijing, and a sample of 900 learners was selected using the cluster technique. The data collection involved indices of parental pressure as well as psychological adjustment inventories that included the Adolescent Self-Rating Life Events Checklist. Findings revealed that excessive academic demands from parents carried an anxious effect on one's psychological well-being, with manifestations in the engendering of anxiety symptoms, low self-esteem, and withdrawal from social activities. The study concluded that although academic support is crucial, there should be a

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consideration of how it is extended. The authors suggested that schools initiate parental training to learn how to assist in the right way, rather than coercively involve themselves. The study presented a conceptual gap as it focused on academic pressure, whereas the current study distinguished parental academic support from academic pressure and extended the evidence to adolescent learners in the Kenyan context.

In the UK, Brown and Wilson (2022) explored parental academic support and adolescent resilience as a paramount dimension of psychological well-being. Conducted in London and Birmingham, the study looked at secondary school learners who were between 11 and 15 years of age. The sample contained 750 learners and their respective parents, chosen purposively for the sample. Researchers used the Resilience Scale for Adolescents (READ) and the parental engagement questionnaires as measuring instruments. The findings showed adolescents were positively impacted by parents' emotional encouragement and assistance with homework, specifically with regard to emotional stability and the development of better coping abilities. The study concluded that academic support by parents enhances adolescents' resilience, especially where the adolescents are socioeconomically disadvantaged. The study recommended that inclusive policies on parental engagement should be promoted in the curricula. The study's conceptual gap is evident in that it treated resilience as the main dimension of psychological well-being rather than examining psychological well-being as a broader outcome, whereas the current study examined psychological well-being and did not limit the outcome to adolescents' resilience.

The Nigerian-based study by Eze and Okonkwo (2024) sought to explore the relationship between homework supervision and adolescent anxiety in Lagos schools. The study focused on the psychological impacts of lack of parental assistance with academic activities such as homework. The population comprised 12–14-year-old adolescents in junior schools, with 680 learners selected through multistage sampling. The study used structured interviews and the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED) scale to collect data. The findings showed moderate supervision of academic activities for the sampled adolescents, which led to minimal anxiety levels. The study concluded that parental engagement in adolescents' academic tasks is beneficial for their psychological outcomes. The study recommended that schools should involve parents in the identification of evidence-based approaches in supporting adolescents academically. The study concentrated on homework supervision as a specific form of academic engagement and anxiety as the psychological outcome, hence presenting a conceptual gap, whereas the current study broadened academic support beyond homework supervision to examine parental academic support more comprehensively.

In South Africa, Van der Merwe and Botha (2023) studied the impact of parental academic support on student well-being in Cape Town. The study targeted junior secondary school students. A sample of 800 was utilized. Data was collected using parental engagement surveys and psychological wellness scales. The study's findings showed that adolescents' self-confidence was improved, and burnout was minimized as a result of parental availability, encouragement, and engagement in school activities. Further, the study implied that when parental engagement is meaningful, a great difference is experienced by adolescents in terms of school satisfaction and emotional stability. The study recommended that teachers should be provided with appropriate training on how parents can best be engaged, utilizing workshops to impart skills on parental

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support. Although the study was conducted in a relatively comparable African context, it combined academic support with parental engagement in school activities, making it difficult to isolate the specific contribution of parental academic support. The current study isolated parental academic support and examined its specific relationship with adolescents' psychological well-being.

Mwambene and Kapinga (2023) investigated the relationship between parental academic engagement and student depression in the city of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Premised on the rise in depression among learners in secondary schools, the study randomly sampled 700 learners from lower secondary schools. The study established that learners whose parents were involved in their academic progress showed lower levels of depression, while those whose parents were not engaged had higher levels of depression. The study therefore concluded that where parental engagement is consistent, adolescents' psychological well-being was protected. The study recommended parents' awareness campaigns to be established in schools, focusing on the beneficial outcomes of parental academic engagement. The study's focus was specifically on depression, which is one aspect of psychological difficulties among adolescents, rather than the broader construct of psychological well-being. However, in the current study, psychological well-being was broadly examined, which addressed the outcome gap.

In Uganda, Kato and Nalubega (2023) studied how parental academic support works in reducing adolescent anxiety in public secondary schools. The population comprised learners aged 12-15 within central Uganda. Stratified sampling was used to select 820 learners. The study used self-administered questionnaires and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7). The findings revealed that parental engagement in academic work, school communication, and academic motivation reduced adolescents' anxiety. The study recommended the development of school-based structures for the provision of academic support, complementing national policy on parental participation in adolescents' wellness programs. The study focused primarily on anxiety reduction, rather than psychological well-being as a multidimensional outcome. Furthermore, parental academic support was combined with school communication and academic motivation, making it difficult to determine the specific relationship between parental academic support and psychological well-being. The current study specifically examined parental academic support and therefore clearly assessed the relationship between parental academic support and psychological well-being of adolescents.

Mutua and Ndung'u (2024) sought to directly examine the role of academic guidance in student mental health in public junior schools in Nairobi County. The study sampled 850 13- to 15-year-old learners from public institutions using simple random sampling. The instruments used in the study were academic support surveys and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The findings revealed that learners with academic advice, tutoring support, and encouragement experienced high levels of motivation, emotional regulation, and proper behaviour. The study concluded that academic guidance could be instrumental in promoting adolescent well-being and recommended that stakeholders in education come up with ways and forums for parent-teacher collaboration in mental health issues. The study focused on academic guidance and selected mental health-related outcomes rather than the broader construct of psychological well-being. The current study conceptualized adolescents' psychological well-being and specifically examined parental academic support as one dimension of parental engagement.

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Research Design and Methodology

The study adopted an **explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design** to examine the relationship between parental engagement and psychological well-being among adolescent learners in public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County, Kenya. A mixed-methods approach was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect quantitative data first and use qualitative findings to explain and provide a deeper understanding of the statistical results. The quantitative phase involved a cross-sectional survey design, while qualitative data were collected through phenomenological approaches using interviews and FGDs (Leavy, 2022; Toyon, 2021). This design enhanced completeness, diversity, and complementarity of findings by integrating numerical evidence with participants' lived experiences. The study was conducted in Kiambu Sub-County, which consists of 21 public junior schools operating under the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). The target population comprised 6,294 learners, 122 teachers, and 63 parent representatives. Stratified sampling was used to select six junior schools and 36 teachers to ensure representation across different categories. A sample of 362 learners was selected using stratified proportionate sampling guided by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. Additionally, 18 parents were purposively selected as key informants because of their knowledge and experiences regarding parental engagement practices within schools. This sampling approach ensured inclusion of different perspectives relevant to the study objectives.

The study employed questionnaires for teachers and learners, the Carol Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale, and interview guides as well as FGDs for parents as data collection instruments. The questionnaires collected information on parental academic support, emotional support, role modelling, and participation in school activities, while the Ryff scale measured learners' psychological well-being across dimensions such as autonomy, positive relationships, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989). Instrument validity was established through expert evaluation and pilot testing, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a threshold of 0.70 adopted as acceptable internal consistency (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020).

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis to establish relationships between parental engagement dimensions and learners' psychological well-being. Qualitative data obtained through interviews were analyzed thematically through transcription, coding, and identification of emerging themes. Integration of findings occurred by comparing quantitative results with qualitative explanations to determine areas of convergence, expansion, or contradiction. Ethical considerations included obtaining research authorization, informed consent, learner assent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and protection of participants' identities. The mixed-methods approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how parental engagement influences adolescent psychological well-being within public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County.

Presentation, Interpretation, and Discussion of Findings

The research question was "What is the relationship between parental academic support and the psychological well-being of adolescent learners in public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County?" Data was collected from teachers using a standardized questionnaire. In addition,

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learners provided responses to open-ended questions, while parents provided responses to interview questions. Teachers were expected to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the 5-point Likert scale items in the questionnaire, where SA (Strongly Agree = 5), A (Agree = 4), N (Neutral = 3), D (Disagree = 1) and SD (Strongly Disagree = 1). The findings are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Parental Academic Support and Psychological Well-Being (N = 36)

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parents regularly assist their children with homework and assignments	1 (2.8%)	9 (25.0%)	15 (41.7%)	7 (19.4%)	4 (11.1%)	3.11	1.008
Learners whose parents support their academic work tend to be more confident in class	19 (52.8%)	15 (41.7%)	2 (5.6%)	-	-	1.53	.609
Parental academic support contributes positively to learners' motivation to learn	23 (63.9%)	12 (33.3%)	1 (2.8%)	-	-	1.39	.549
Lack of parental academic support often leads to low self-esteem among learners	15 (41.7%)	17 (47.2%)	4 (11.1%)	-	-	1.69	.668
I have observed that learners with active parental academic support display better emotional stability	21 (58.3%)	14 (38.9%)	1 (2.8%)	-	-	1.44	.558
Parents who attend academic meetings contribute to their children's improved psychological well-being	16 (44.4%)	17 (47.2%)	2 (5.6%)	1 (2.8%)	-	1.67	.717
Learners whose parents monitor their academic progress tend to show reduced anxiety about schoolwork	10 (27.8%)	18 (50.0%)	4 (11.1%)	3 (8.3%)	1 (2.8%)	2.08	.996
Parental guidance in academic matters enhances learners' resilience in the face of academic challenges	15 (41.7%)	19 (52.8%)	1 (2.8%)	1 (2.8%)	-	1.67	.676
I believe learners feel more secure when parents are engaged in their academic life	21 (58.3%)	11 (30.6%)	3 (8.3%)	1 (2.8%)	-	1.56	.773
There is a noticeable difference in the behaviour of learners whose parents show interest in their academic performance	17 (47.2%)	14 (38.9%)	5 (13.9%)	-	-	1.67	.717

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The results presented in Table 1 suggest that academic support from parents was mostly perceived as positively contributing to the psychological well-being of the learners. The majority of the respondents agreed that parental involvement improves learners' motivation, confidence, emotional stability, and resilience. For example, 23 (63.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 12 (33.3%) agreed that parental academic support positively influences the motivation of learners to learn, with only 1 (2.8%) being neutral (M = 1.39, SD = 0.549). This indicates parental

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engagement provides emotional and academic resources for positive functioning in learners. The results support Ryff's Psychological Well-being Theory that positive relationships and environmental support are conducive to effective psychological functioning. Johnson and Smith (2023) reported similar findings where they established that parental engagement was associated with improved adolescent mental health outcomes but their study was conducted in a different educational and cultural context.

Results showed mixed responses to regular assistance from parents with homework and assignments. Only 1 (2.8%) respondent strongly agreed, and 9 (25.0%) agreed that parents assist learners regularly with homework, while 15 (41.7%) were neutral, 7 (19.4%) disagreed, and 4 (11.1%) strongly disagreed (M = 3.11, SD = 1.008). The high standard deviation indicates that learners had a wide range of experiences, and also that not all parents are involved in providing direct academic support. According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory, engagement of parents in the social learning process can influence the learner through encouragement, modelling, and reinforcement, even when they are limited in their ability to give direct support with homework. This finding is partially in agreement with the finding of Eze and Okonkwo (2024), who found that parental supervision of academic activities reduced adolescent anxiety, although the present study shows differences in the availability of such support.

The respondents strongly associated parental academic support with learners' confidence in the classroom. 19 (52.8%) strongly agreed, and 15 (41.7%) agreed that those learners whose parents support their academic work tend to be more confident. Only 2 (5.6%) were neutral (M = 1.53, SD = 0.609). The lack of disagreement indicates a high level of consensus that parental encouragement enhances learners' academic self-belief. According to Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, positive relationships in adolescent years help develop competence and identity. Parents' academic support could give learners confidence in the face of academic challenges. This is in line with the findings of Van der Merwe and Botha (2023), who reported that parental encouragement increased self-confidence and emotional stability of adolescents.

The findings also revealed that parental academic support increased learners' motivation to learn. Most of the respondents strongly agreed (23, 63.9%) and agreed (12, 33.3%) that parental academic support positively contributes to learners' motivation, while only 1 (2.8%) was neutral (M = 1.39, SD = 0.549). The high level of agreement shows that parental encouragement and academic involvement may enhance learners' willingness to engage in school activities. According to Ryff's psychological well-being theory, purposeful engagement and positive relationships facilitate the pursuit of meaningful goals. This finding is consistent with Mwambene and Kapinga (2023), who found that parental academic engagement protected learners' psychological well-being by reducing depressive symptoms. However, the current study extends this evidence by investigating broader psychological well-being rather than depression alone.

The results revealed that respondents believed that the lack of academic support from parents led to low self-esteem among learners. In particular, 15 (41.7%) strongly agreed, and 17 (47.2%) agreed with the statement, while 4 (11.1%) were neutral (M = 1.69, SD = 0.668). None of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This shows there is a strong awareness of the negative effects of lack of parental involvement. Bandura's Social Learning Theory states that

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learners develop perceptions of competence by interacting with significant others who provide feedback and encouragement, such as parents. In this way, the absence of parental support can restrict opportunities for positive reinforcement and confidence development. This finding is consistent with Li and Zhang (2023), who found that inappropriate parental academic engagement affects adolescents' self-esteem and psychological adjustment, though they focused on academic pressure rather than supportive involvement.

The findings revealed that active parental academic support was associated with positive emotional stability among learners, according to respondents. Most strongly agreed (21, 58.3%) and agreed (14, 38.9%), and only 1 (2.8%) was neutral (M=1.44, SD=0.558). The low standard deviation indicates that the respondents had similar views about the emotional benefits of parental engagement. Ryff's Psychological Well-being Theory suggests supportive relationships are a positive factor for emotional balance and functioning. This finding is consistent with Brown and Wilson (2022), who found that parental encouragement and homework assistance were associated with higher levels of emotional stability and coping ability in adolescents. However, they were interested in resilience as a specific outcome, while the present study focused on psychological well-being as a more general construct.

The results indicated that parents' participation in academic meetings was perceived to contribute to the psychological well-being of learners. 16 (44.4%) respondents strongly agreed, 17 (47.2%) respondents agreed, 2 (5.6%) respondents were neutral, and 1 (2.8%) respondent disagreed (M = 1.67, SD = 0.717). The results suggest that the presence of parents in school-related activities may strengthen emotional security and attachment of learners to the educational support systems. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory emphasizes the importance of supportive relationships in assisting adolescents to learn how to develop confidence and a stable identity. This finding supports the findings of Van der Merwe and Botha (2023), who found that meaningful parental engagement improved learners' confidence and satisfaction with school. The current study, however, isolates academic support, whereas their study combined several types of parental engagement.

The findings showed that the more parents monitored academic performance, the less anxious students were about schoolwork. The respondents strongly agreed (10; 27.8%), agreed (18; 50.0%), were neutral (4; 11.1%), disagreed (3; 8.3%), and strongly disagreed (1; 2.8%) (M = 2.08, SD = 0.996). Although the agreement was generally high, the relatively larger standard deviation reflects differences in the experiences of learners regarding parental monitoring. According to Ryff's theory of psychological well-being, environmental support helps people to cope with challenges and maintain psychological balance. The result is consistent with Kato and Nalubega (2023), who observed that parental academic involvement lowered adolescent anxiety. However, their study combined parental support with school communication and academic motivation, whereas this study focused solely on parental academic support.

Also, the results showed that parental guidance made the learners more resilient when they were challenged academically. 15 (41.7%) respondents strongly agreed, and 19 (52.8%) agreed; only 1 (2.8%) was neutral and 1 (2.8%) disagreed (M=1.67, SD=0.676). This demonstrates that the guidance from parents can be seen by learners as an essential resource in the management of academic difficulties. Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that parents can shape resilience

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by modelling problem-solving behaviours and reinforcing positive coping methods. The findings support the findings of Brown and Wilson (2022), who found that parental emotional encouragement contributed to adolescents' resilience. However, the current study has contextualized resilience within the larger psychological well-being of learners within the Kenyan context.

The results revealed that learners with parents who were involved in their academic lives showed more psychological security. The findings showed that 21 (58.3%) strongly agreed and 11 (30.6%) agreed that learners feel more secure when parents are engaged academically. 3 (8.3%) were not sure, and 1 (2.8%) disagreed (M = 1.56, SD = 0.773). It demonstrates that parental academic involvement provides learners with reassurance and a sense of belongingness in the learning environment. According to Ryff's Psychological Well-being Theory, positive relationships are key to psychological functioning because they provide emotional support and stability. This finding is in line with Johnson and Smith's (2023) finding that parental engagement was associated with better adolescent mental health outcomes. The current study, however, adds to the body of knowledge by providing contextual evidence from Kenyan public junior schools where family involvement may be influenced by varying social and educational conditions.

Results also showed that respondents observed differences in learner behaviours according to the level of parental academic involvement. A total of 17 (47.2%) strongly agreed, and 14 (38.9%) agreed that the learners whose parents show interest in their academic performance show noticeable behavioural differences, while 5 (13.9%) were neutral (M = 1.67, SD = 0.717). The results indicate that parental interest can influence learners' attitudes, discipline, and emotional reactions in the school environment. According to Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, adolescents form their identity through interaction with significant others. Supportive parental relationships can facilitate positive adjustment. This finding concurs with Mutua and Ndung'u (2024), who found that academic guidance was associated with increased motivation, emotional regulation, and behaviour among learners in public junior schools in Nairobi County.

Overall, the results show that parental academic support is a significant factor in the psychological well-being of learners. The areas of strongest agreement were around motivation, emotional stability, confidence and resilience, whilst the area of weakest agreement was around parents' direct support with homework and assignments, with more varied responses. These findings can be well explained by Ryff's Psychological Well-being Theory, which centers on the fact that supportive relationships boost the learners' ability to attain positive psychological functioning. Likewise, regional studies like those of Kato and Nalubega (2023) and Mwambene and Kapinga (2023) supported the findings. They found that academic involvement of parents was linked to reduced anxiety and better mental health outcomes among adolescents. Therefore, improving the school-based parental academic support programs might help to improve psychological well-being among learners, particularly when support is provided not only in terms of academic monitoring but also emotional encouragement and constructive guidance.

The focus group discussions with the learners indicated that parental encouragement and interest in academic progress were important factors that influenced the learners' confidence and motivation. When parents asked about their schoolwork, acknowledged their efforts, and encouraged them to continue working hard, the learners said they felt valued and became more

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committed to learning. This qualitative finding is in line with the quantitative findings in Table 1, where 19 (52.8%) respondents strongly agreed, and 15 (41.7%) agreed that learners whose parents support their academic work tend to be more confident in class (M = 1.53, SD = 0.609). Similarly, the finding supports the view that parents' academic support contributes positively to learners' motivation, where 23 (63.9%) strongly agreed, and 12 (33.3%) agreed (M = 1.39, SD =.549).

Parental involvement was described by one learner as giving a sense of encouragement and responsibility in their group discussion. One learner asserted:

> And every time my parents ask me about my school work and encourage me to do better, I feel they believe in me. It motivates me to work harder in my studies because I know that there is someone at home who cares about my performance and wants me to succeed (LEARNER FGD, July 28, 2026).

The interviews with the parents added support to this view. Parents observed that their involvement was not just about checking marks, but also about emotional encouragement. Some parents mentioned that motivating for improvement, talking about challenges, and showing interest in school activities helped learners gain confidence. The findings support Ryff's theory of psychological well-being that positive relationships and supportive environments are important for psychological functioning.

The qualitative results also revealed that learners linked parental support with emotional security and reduction in academic stress. The participants in the focus group discussions said that knowing that their parents were there to guide them when they faced academic difficulties made them feel less afraid and frustrated. This supports the finding in Table 1 that 21 (58.3%) respondents strongly agreed and 14 (38.9%) agreed that learners with active parental academic support show better emotional stability (M = 1.44, SD = 0.558). One learner explained:

> *Sometimes the schoolwork is hard, and when I talk to my parents, they encourage me, not blame me. "They support me, and they help me stay calm and keep trying even if I don't do well* (LEARNER FGD, August 13, 2026).

Parents also said emotional encouragement was a key part of helping their children academically. Some parents said that sometimes children felt pressure from exams and assignments, so listening and guiding them was more effective than demanding high grades. This finding is in line with the work of Brown and Wilson (2022), who found that parental support helps adolescents to be more emotionally stable and better at coping.

Qualitative findings indicated challenges to parents' ability to directly assist with academic work, although parental support was a positive contribution. Some parents wanted to help but didn't have much time due to work or household responsibilities, learners said. This finding is consistent with the less robust quantitative finding in Table 1 regarding homework help. Only 1 (2.8%) strongly agreed, and 9 (25.0%) agreed that parents often help with homework, while 15 (41.7%) were neutral, 7 (19.4%) disagreed, and 4 (11.1%) strongly disagreed (M = 3.11, SD = 1.008). One learner said:

> My parent supports me and inquires about my studies, but sometimes they are not available to help with assignments because they come home late. Usually, I

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> try to complete the difficult work myself or ask my teachers or classmates for help (LEARNER FGD, August 14, 2026).

Parents also recognized the importance of education, but some found it difficult to consistently help their children with schoolwork due to work commitments, financial responsibilities, and a lack of understanding of certain subjects. This finding implies that parental academic support should not only be concerned with the willingness of parents but also structural factors that influence their participation.

Interviews also indicated that learners valued the monitoring of parents as this assisted them to remain disciplined and organized with their academic work. Learners reported that parents who followed up on assignments, examination preparation, and school attendance promoted responsible learning behaviours. This is supported by Table 1, where 10 (27.8%) respondents strongly agreed, and 18 (50.0%) agreed that learners who have their academic progress monitored by their parents tend to exhibit lowered anxiety toward school work (M = 2.08, SD = 0.996). One parent explained that "when I check up on my child's school work, I am not trying to pressure them. "I want to know where they're struggling so I can encourage them and seek help where it's needed".

This finding supports Bandura's Social Learning Theory, where parental guidance provides modelling, reinforcement, and feedback that influences learners' academic behaviours. However, the findings also imply that the monitoring should be supportive rather than controlling, as too much pressure may have a negative impact on learners' psychological well-being.

Qualitative findings also pointed out the significance of the quality of parental involvement. Learners appreciated encouragement and guidance; however, some highlighted that over-expectation from their parents could cause stress and fear of failure. This adds to the quantitative findings by clarifying why parental support may be associated with different psychological outcomes depending on its provision. This is similar to the findings of Li and Zhang (2023), who found that the overload of academic pressure by the parents was associated with anxiety, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal among adolescents. Note of the learner:

> It is good for us when parents encourage us; it makes us feel confident, but when parents only focus on high marks and compare us with others, it makes us feel stressed and afraid of disappointing them (LEARNER FGD, August 15, 2026).

Thus, the qualitative findings confirm and enrich the quantitative results presented in Table 1, emphasizing that the effective support by parents in academics involves academic demands, but also encouragement, emotional availability, and constructive guidance.

As a general rule, the learner FGDs and parent interviews confirmed the quantitative results presented in Table 1 that parental academic support boosts learners' confidence, motivation, emotional stability, resilience, and sense of security. However, qualitative data also showed challenges related to parental availability and the risk of excessive academic pressure. The findings suggest that parental involvement impacts psychological well-being not only by the provision of support, but by the quality, consistency, and emotional nature of support. These findings are consistent with Ryff's Psychological Well-being Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and

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Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory as they indicate that supportive family relationships are linked to psychological development and positive academic adjustment in the learners.

Conclusions

The study concluded that parental academic support is significantly associated with the psychological well-being of adolescent learners in public junior schools in Kiambu Sub-County, Kenya. Emotional support, role modelling, and participation in school activities were also found to contribute positively to learners' confidence, resilience, motivation, emotional stability, and sense of belonging. The study established that effective parental engagement extends beyond providing academic assistance to include guidance, encouragement, and supportive relationships that enhance adolescents' psychological functioning. Therefore, parental engagement remains an important component in promoting learners' holistic development, academic adjustment, and ability to cope with the challenges associated with adolescence.

Recommendations

The study recommended that parents should adopt supportive, consistent, and non-coercive approaches when engaging with adolescents by providing academic guidance, emotional encouragement, and positive role modelling. Schools should strengthen parent–school partnerships through regular communication, parental awareness programmes, and activities that encourage meaningful participation in learners' academic and social development. Education stakeholders and policymakers should develop interventions that address barriers limiting effective parental academic support, including socioeconomic challenges and inadequate family–school collaboration. Strengthening parental support systems would contribute to improved psychological well-being and better educational experiences among adolescent learners in public junior schools.

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