



Effects of Psychosocial Interventions on Growth of Adolescent Students in Public Secondary Schools in Trans-Nzoia County

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Abstract

The main objective of the study was to examine the effects of psychosocial interventions on growth of adolescent students in public secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County. The theoretical frame-work used in this study was the Social Cognitive Theory that considers the unique way in which individuals acquire and maintain behaviour which considers the social environment of an individual. The study applied the descriptive research design. The target population was 239 public secondary schools within Trans-Nzoia County and a sample size of 116 schools was arrived at using Nassiuma (2000) formula. The sample for the study was identified by using convenience and stratified random sampling techniques. Data was collected using structured questionnaires, document analysis, interviews and observation schedule. The study adopted descriptive and inferential data analysis. The study found that both of psychosocial interventions affect growth of adolescent students significantly in public secondary schools. Majority of the respondents indicated that the psychosocial challenges depicted by the adolescent students in their schools is depression (42%) anxiety disorder (17%) emotional and behavioural difficulties (12%), substance abuse (14%), Suicidal behaviour (10%) and lastly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (5%). It was evident that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that (Mean=4.77) the psychosocial interventions add value to adolescent students' growth/development. The regression of coefficients results showed that psychosocial interventions and adolescent student growth are positively and significantly related ($\beta=0.295$, $p=0.000$). The findings will be useful in the development of useful guidelines on cognitive mentors on psychosocial behaviour and also to lay strong ground for further interventional research.

Keywords: Psychosocial, challenges, interventions, students, secondary, schools

INTRODUCTION

Psychosocial disorders refer to a broader category of mental health conditions that encompass both psychological and social aspects (Eime et al., 2013). These disorders are influenced by a combination of individual psychological factors (such as thoughts, emotions, and behaviors) and social factors (such as relationships, socioeconomic status, and cultural influences) (Van Loey & Van Son, 2003). Psychosocial disorders are characterized by impairments in personal functioning, social interactions, and overall well-being (Goodman, Doorley & Kashdan, 2018). The common disorders include anxiety and depression (internalizing maladies) and delinquency, aggression, studying challenges and truancy (externalizing maladies) (Aoyama, 2010).

Adolescence is the key transitional stage of growth that lies between adulthood and childhood reflecting the transition period of which a human being experiences various emotional and physiological changes (Cameron et al., 2018; Vygotsky, 2004). During this period adolescent students are affected by school and home environments (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009). Academic institutions contribute greatly in their development as they engage in co-curricular activities and thus making them complete academics at home. Schools contribute greatly to the overall development of learners (Lazaro & Anney, 2016).

Psychosocial disorders can negatively impact students' ability to concentrate, focus, and engage in learning activities. Symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and difficulty with impulse control can interfere with their academic performance, leading to lower grades, decreased motivation, and a higher risk of school dropout (Killu et al., 2016). In addition, adolescents with psychosocial disorders are at a higher risk of engaging in substance abuse (Donovan, 2004). They may turn to drugs or alcohol as a means of coping with their emotional distress, peer pressure, or as a form of self-medication. Substance abuse further worsens their mental health symptoms and can have detrimental effects on their overall well-being. Some adolescents with psychosocial disorders may resort to self-harm behaviors or experience suicidal thoughts. The emotional pain, feelings of hopelessness, and a lack of effective coping mechanisms can contribute to these extreme measures (Carvalho et al., 2015).

Psychosocial disorders experienced during adolescence can have long-term consequences. If left untreated or unaddressed, these disorders can persist into adulthood and contribute to chronic mental health problems. Early intervention and support are crucial to prevent the escalation of these disorders and promote healthier outcomes in the future. Psychosocial disorders can disrupt various aspects of an adolescent's development, including emotional, cognitive, and social development. They may experience delays in achieving developmental milestones, struggle with decision-making and problem-solving skills, and face challenges in developing a positive sense of identity and self-worth

Numerous studies have been conducted in Kenya regarding the prevalence of psychosocial disorders among students (Okongo, 2021; Ndetei et al., 2022; Mokaya et al., 2017). The results of these studies have indicated a significant level of concern regarding the incidence of psychosocial disorders among students which have affected their growth and performance. Few studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of intervention measures in reducing the incidence of psychosocial disorders and promoting growth of students in secondary schools. Therefore, this study sort to assess the effects of psychosocial interventions on growth of adolescent students in public secondary schools in Trans-Nzoia County

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is a psychological framework developed by Albert Bandura in 1977 that emphasizes the role of cognitive processes in learning and behavior. Bandura proposed SCT as an extension of traditional behaviorist theories, recognizing the importance of mental processes, observational learning, and social interactions in shaping human behavior (Manjarres-Posad et al., 2020).

SLT posits that people learn from one another, via: observation; imitation, and modelling. Based on some researchers such as Muro and Jeffrey (2008) which supported Bandura's SLT concepts this kind of learning also emphasis on internal thoughts and cognitions and it can help connect learning theories to cognitive

developmental theories. This theory was therefore be instrumental in investigating the interventions used in managing adolescents’ growth challenges.

Conceptual Framework

This research study was based on theories that aimed at enhancing understanding on how psychosocial interventions affect the growth of adolescent students in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya.

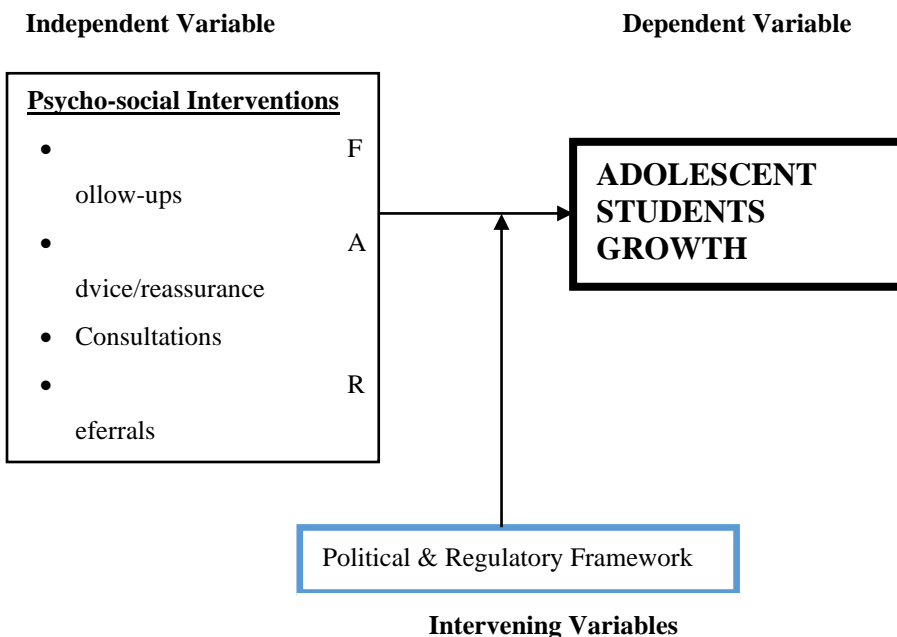


Figure 1: Effects of Psychosocial Interventions on Growth of Adolescent Students

Source: Author 2022

It is a conceptualization of the relationships among interventions orientation, influence on the growth of adolescent students in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya. The independent variables were composed of psychosocial interventions.

METHODOLOGY

The research was based on the philosophical and methodological foundations of pragmatism. This methodological principle was pegged on pragmatism by the Deweyan principle of inquiry, which relates beliefs and action through a process of decision-making (Morgan, 2014). The study adopted a mixed method research design using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The target population was 239 public secondary schools within Transzoia County and a sample size of 116 schools was arrived at using Nassiuma (2000) formula. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select public secondary schools to be studied in the five sub-counties. Purposive sampling was used to select Heads of Guidance & Counselling, Deputy Principals in public secondary schools and students. The instrument was a questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions. In order to determine the validity and reliability of the study instruments, a pilot test was conducted using 10% of the total sample size (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The questionnaire response

was entered into statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was generated to assess reliability. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient was to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability. A reliability value of 0.83 was obtained and a coefficient of 0.7 was used as recommended by Cronbach. Collected data was analysed using descriptive analysis such as means and frequency and presented in form of tables and figures. In addition, correlation analysis was employed in determining the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. P-values as 5% level of significance. A 95% confidence level was applied. P-values was used as 5% level of significance.

Y' = A predicted value of Y (which is dependant variable also known as Growth/Development of Adolescent Students).

α = the value of Y when X is equal to zero. This is also called the "Y Intercept".

β = the change in Y for each 1 increment change in X. (X1 X2) = an X score on independent variable for which the study is trying to predict a value of Y.

X= independent variable (X and X2) and e = Residual or error terms

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Y= Growth/ Development of Adolescent Students (Dependant variable)

X₁ = Psychosocial Interventions, X₂ = Political and government regulatory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Psychosocial challenges depicted by the adolescent students

The respondents were asked to indicate Psychosocial challenges depicted by the adolescent students. Results of the response are presented in figure 1 below.

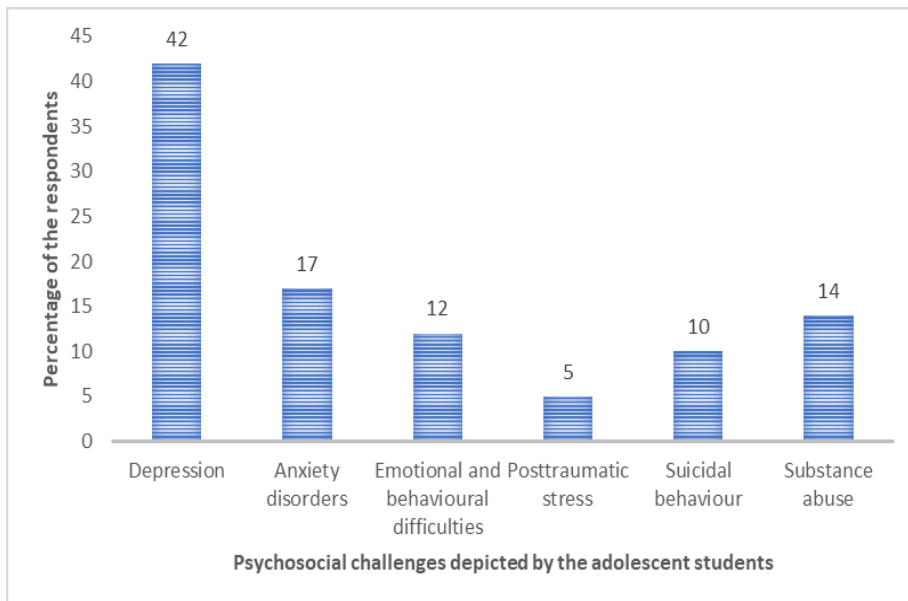


Figure 1: Psychosocial challenges depicted by the adolescent students in schools

Majority of the respondents in figure 1 indicated that the psychosocial challenges depicted by the adolescent students in their schools is depression (42%) while 17% of them responded that anxiety disorder is another major challenge to the students. The others include emotional and behavioural difficulties (12%), substance abuse (14%), Suicidal behaviour (10%) and lastly past traumatic stress (5%).

Depression is a significant mental health issue among adolescents worldwide, with detrimental impacts on academic and psychosocial functioning. In Kenya, a limited number of studies have investigated depression among secondary school students, which is concerning given the high prevalence of depression globally. In a recent study conducted by Ndetei et al. (2022), an evaluation was made of the potential risk factors for suicidal ideation among Kenyan students aged 15 years and above. The study examined socio-demographic, economic, and mental health difficulties, and found that a significant proportion (20%) of participants reported experiencing symptoms of depression. Osborn et al. (2019) conducted a research study on high school students in Kenya, revealing a high prevalence of depression (45.9%) that exceeded the clinical cutoff point.

Anxiety disorder is a common mental health condition among adolescents, which can lead to psychosocial challenges that affect their overall wellbeing, academic performance, and social interactions. According to a study conducted in Kenya, it was estimated that approximately 26.4% of adolescents aged between 13 and 19 who attend secondary schools have encountered general anxiety disorders (Nyayieka et al., 2020). In a study conducted by Osborn et al. (2019) among high school students in Kenya, it was reported that the prevalence of anxiety levels (37.99%) exceeded the clinical cutoff. Another study conducted by Frank-Briggs and Alikor (2010) on anxiety disorders among secondary school students in urban areas of Nigeria, it was reported that the prevalence of anxiety among students aged 11-19 years was 10.28%. Also, a study conducted in Dodoma, Tanzania found that a significant proportion of students suffered from anxiety disorders, leading to a detrimental impact on their academic achievement (Yusuph, 2016).

Suicidal behavior is a major public health concern among adolescents worldwide. In Kenya, adolescent students in secondary schools are at risk of suicidal behavior due to various psychosocial problems. According to the research conducted by Ndetei et al. (2022) on mental health challenges experienced by Kenyan students aged 15 years and above, a considerable proportion of participants reported experiencing suicidal ideation, with a prevalence rate of 22.6%. The occurrence of suicidal ideation was found to have a significant association with female gender, serious depression, stress, affectivity, and high school.

Substance abuse among adolescents is a global public health problem that affects their physical, mental, and social well-being. In Kenya, there is a growing concern about substance abuse among adolescents, particularly in secondary schools. Studies have shown that substance abuse is prevalent among adolescents in secondary schools in Kenya. While evaluating the Effects of Drug and Substance Abuse in Secondary Schools in Garissa County, Kenya, Kisaka (2019) reported that students abuse drugs because they are readily available, because of peer pressure, and to relieve tension. In addition, students who abuse drugs perform poorly academically, miss classes frequently, exhibit indiscipline, steal or damage school property, influence others to engage in the vice, and may even drop out of school. According to Simatwa et al. (2014), in their study on substance abuse among public secondary school students in Kenya, the prevalent substances abused by students were alcohol, cigarettes, miraa/khat, and marijuana.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a common psychiatric disorder that occurs in response to traumatic events. PTSD can manifest in various forms, such as intrusive thoughts, nightmares, hyperarousal, and avoidance behaviors. In Kenya, adolescent students in secondary schools are exposed to various traumatic events, including ethnic

and political conflicts, terrorism, and violence. In their cross-sectional study, Astitene and Barkat (2021) reported a notable incidence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among adolescents in school, with a prevalence rate of 19.3% (n = 168), which had a significant impact on their overall well-being.

Psychosocial Interventions provided by schools

The study further sought to establish the psychosocial Interventions provided by schools. Likert scale were posed to the respondents. The responses were coded as 1= strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. The summary of the findings is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Psychosocial Interventions provided by schools

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Our school integrates psychosocial interventions within the school operations	3	4	9	26	58	4.61
Staff understand psychosocial interventions clearly	6	9	23	41	21	3.57
The school management encourages the use of the interventions	8	12	16	50	15	4.09
The school management emphasize on research and development on the interventions	7	9	16	40	28	3.81
Generally speaking, the Guidance and Counselling Team is active.	9	11	16	17	47	4.01
Our school management supports open dialogue amongst employees.	4	5	8	24	59	4.61
In the last one year our school has developed and applied psychosocial interventions	8	12	15	18	47	4.73
Psychosocial interventions contribute to the growth of our adolescent students.	9	7	24	42	18	3.81

It was evident from Table 1 that, majority of respondents strongly agreed (Mean=4.61), that their school integrates psychosocial interventions within the school operations. One study, for example, found that a school-based intervention aimed at reducing psychological distress among students lead to significant improvements in mental health outcomes, including reductions in anxiety and depression symptoms (Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014; Tejada-Gallardo et al., 2020; Patel et al., 2013).

Also, majority of the respondents (Mean=3.57) agreed that staff understand psychosocial interventions clearly. For instance, a study conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, found that school staff who received training on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) were better equipped to provide support to students who were experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties (Jefwa et al., 2020). The study also found that the implementation of MHPSS interventions in schools improved the quality of life and academic performance of students.

Further, respondents strongly agreed that (Mean=4.09) the school management encourages the use of the interventions while majority agreed that (Mean=3.81) the school management emphasize on research and development on the interventions. One study conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, explored the implementation of a school-based mental health program for adolescent students. The study found that the success of the program was largely dependent on the support and commitment of school management, who played a key role in ensuring the program's sustainability and integration into the school's culture (Ndetei et al., 2018).

In addition, majority of them strongly agreed (Mean=4.01) that generally speaking, the guidance and counselling Team is active in their schools. Guidance and Counselling is an integral part of education process and plays the role of supplementing and complementing all other educational programmes in the school system (Mutie & Ndambuki, 1999). Moreover, majority strongly agreed (Mean=4.61) that their school management supports open dialogue amongst employees and in the last one year our school has developed and applied psychosocial interventions (Mean=4.73). A study conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, explored the implementation of a school-based mental health program and highlighted the importance of creating a supportive environment that encourages open communication between program staff and school personnel (Ndetei et al., 2018).

Lastly, psychosocial interventions contribute to the growth of our adolescent students according to majority of the respondents (Mean=3.81). One study conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, evaluated the effectiveness of a school-based mental health program on improving the emotional wellbeing of students. The study found that the program significantly reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress among participating students (Ndetei et al., 2018).

Psychosocial interventions

The study sought to find out whether school apply psychosocial interventions to make your adolescent students grow. Figure 2 presents the findings.

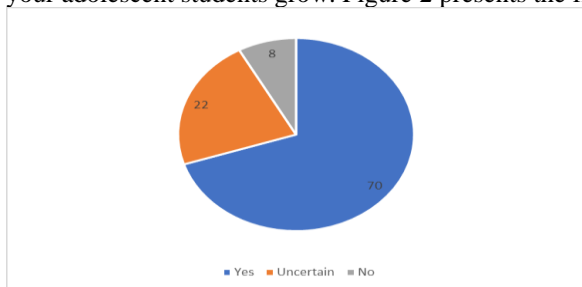


Figure 2: psychosocial interventions application

The analyzed data on psychosocial interventions indicates that majority of the public secondary schools have measures in place (70%), 22% of them were uncertain if their schools apply psychosocial interventions while only 8% responded that their schools do not apply psychosocial interventions to make your adolescent students grow. Psychosocial interventions are a critical component in the management of Psychosocial disorders among adolescent students in secondary schools in Kenya. These interventions aim to improve the psychosocial well-being of the students by addressing their emotional, social, and behavioral needs. Several studies have shown that guidance and counseling services are effective in reducing symptoms of mental health disorders, improving academic performance, and promoting positive behavior among students (Nzoka & Orodho, 2014; Bani et al., 2022; Durlak & Wells, 1998; Jacob & Coustasse, 2008; Prince, 2015).

The study further rated their response for those who said yes and presented the findings in figure 3 below.

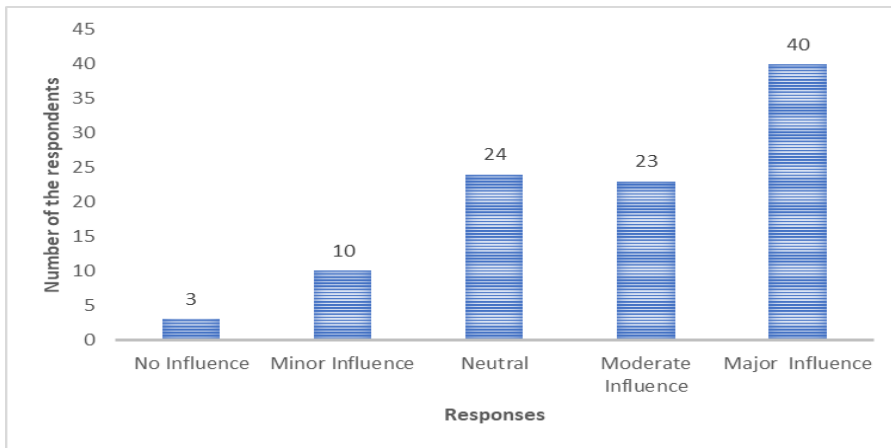


Figure 3: Respondents’ Rate on how the interventions influence growth of your adolescent students

Majority of the respondents indicated that psychological interventions introduced in public secondary schools had a major influence on the growth of the adolescents’ students (40%), 24% were neutral, 23% indicated that it had moderate influence, 10% indicated that it had minor influence while 3% indicated it has no influence on the growth of the adolescents’ students. The findings of this study are supported by a study conducted by Theuri and Mutisya (2021) examined the impact of a group-based counseling intervention on the self-esteem and academic performance of Kenyan secondary school students. The study found that the counseling intervention was effective in improving students’ self-esteem and academic performance over a 12-week period. Generally, psychological interventions can have a significant positive impact on the growth and development of Kenyan secondary school students. These interventions can improve self-esteem, academic performance, reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance psychological well-being (Ciarrochi et al., 2007; Cripps & Zyromski, 2009). As such, the introduction of psychological interventions in Kenyan public secondary schools may be an important step in promoting the overall well-being of adolescent students in Kenya.

School membership

The study further attempted to find out if the school is a registered member of Kenya Counselling and Psychological Association (KCPA). Their response is summarized in figure 4 below.

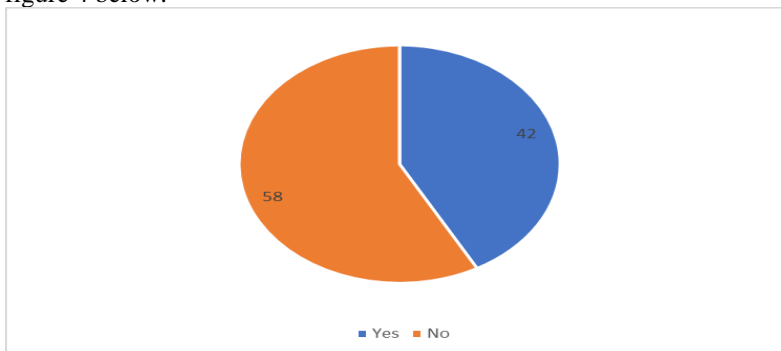


Figure 4: Registration status of the school as Kenya Counselling and Psychological Association (KCPA)

It's evident that majority of schools are not registered (58%) as a member of Kenya Counselling and Psychological Association (KCPA) while only 42% of the respondents replied that their school is registered member. Kiptalam et al. (2020), it was found that the majority of secondary schools in Kenya are not registered with professional counseling bodies. The authors identified various challenges that hinder schools from registering, including a lack of awareness of the importance of registration, insufficient resources to meet the registration requirements, and a lack of government support. According to Okech and Kimemia, (2012) and Gatua, (2013) secondary school registration with professional counseling bodies in Kenya is essential in ensuring that guidance and counseling services are provided effectively to students. The authors argue that such registration helps to ensure that guidance and counseling services in schools are provided by qualified professionals who have been trained and certified by professional bodies. Another study by Njoka, (2007) found that schools that had registered with professional counseling bodies and had qualified counselors on staff had better academic performance than schools without such registration.

Importance of school registration with professional bodies

The study further sought to establish Importance of school registration with professional bodies. Likert scale were posed to the respondents. The responses were coded as 1= strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. The summary of the findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Importance of school registration with professional bodies

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Departments or sections in our school work well with each other towards common goals and objectives.	10	5	13	52	20	3.69
Our staff are encouraged and supported to join and participate in professional associations	12	12	14	45	20	3.32
Our school learns a lot from other organisations	8	9	15	48	20	3.51
Other organisations could learn a lot from our schools	11	10	15	10	54	4.23
Our schools believes in sharing resources, ideas, information and advice with adolescent students	5	10	9	20	60	4.51
Our school believes that absolute secrecy is essential in maintaining an advantage over our competitors	7	10	50	16	15	3.02

From table 2, majority of the respondents agreed that (Mean=3.69), the departments or sections in our school work well with each other towards common goals and objectives. Guidance and counseling departments play a crucial role in providing psychosocial support to students (Lugonzo, 2020).

Respondents agreed (Mean=3.32), that our staff are encouraged and supported to join and participate in professional associations. The finding concurs with those of Njuguna (2018) examined the extent to which secondary school staff in Kenya were involved in professional associations in guiding and counseling. The study found that while some staff were members of professional associations, many were not aware of the existence of such associations or the benefits of membership. The study recommended that schools should actively encourage staff to join professional associations and provide support for membership fees and other costs.

They also agreed that (Mean=3.51) that our school learns a lot from other organisations. Further they strongly agreed (Mean=4.23) that other organisations could learn a lot from our schools and our schools believes in sharing resources, ideas,

information and advice with adolescent students (Mean=4.51) and finally, were neutral that (Mean=3.02) our school believes that absolute secrecy is essential in maintaining an advantage over our competitors. A study by Kanga (2017) stated that guidance and counseling departments should work closely with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to identify and address the psychosocial needs of students.

Students' response

The researcher was also interested in the students' perspectives on psychosocial and behavioural concerns, as well as their intervention strategies. Their responses are presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Students' perspectives on psychosocial and behavioural concerns, as well as their intervention strategies.

Questions	Response	Percentage
Gender	Boy	52%
	Girl	48%
Does the school have a Guidance and Counselling Department?	Yes	68%
	No	32%
Does the Guidance and Counselling Department address your needs	Yes	46%
	No	54%
Does the school integrate interventions in its operations?	Yes	22%
	No	78%
Does the G & C staff understand the various interventions clearly?	Yes	33%
	No	67%
Does the school management encourage the use of various interventions?	Yes	13%
	No	87%
Are the interventions effective?	Yes	36%
	No	64%
Have you benefitted from various interventions instituted by the Guiding & Counselling team?	Yes	75%
	No	25%
Have the interventions added value to your growth as an adolescent?	Yes	19%
	No	81%

Table 3 indicated that majority of students were boys 52% and 48% were girls. The study asked the students if their school have a Guidance and Counselling Department, 68% responded yes and 38% responded no. The study further asked the researcher if the Guidance and Counselling Department address their needs 54% said no and 46% said no. Researcher asked the students if the school integrate interventions in its operations and 78% said no and 22% said yes. Furthermore, the researcher asked the students if the Guiding & Counselling staff understand the various interventions clearly and 67% said no and 33% said yes. Students were also asked if the school management encourage the use of various interventions and 87% said no while 13% said yes and if the interventions effective 64% said no while 36% said yes. The study further assessed whether the students have benefitted from various interventions instituted by the guiding & counselling team and 75% said yes while 25% said no. In addition, student was asked if interventions have added value to their growth 19% said yes while 81% said no. Finally, the study further asked the students to name some of the challenges that they face as an adolescent. They stated as mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress are common among adolescents. substance abuse is another major challenge they are facing. also, bullying, peer pressure such as drug abuse, premarital sex, and delinquent behavior, gender-based violence such as sexual

assault, sexual harassment mostly reported by girls and finally cultural factors. The findings of this study collaborate with those of Ngome et al. (2021) who explored the challenges faced by adolescent girls in Kenyan schools. The study found that adolescent girls face various challenges, including lack of access to sanitary products, inadequate toilets and bathroom facilities, and sexual harassment, among others. Another study by Omwenga et al. (2019) explored the challenges faced by adolescent students with disabilities in Kenyan schools. The study found that adolescent students with disabilities face various challenges, including lack of access to assistive devices, negative attitudes from teachers and peers, and inadequate support services, among others. Moreover, a study by Ouma and Wafula (2018) examined the challenges faced by adolescent students in Kenyan secondary schools. The study found that adolescent students in Kenyan secondary schools face various challenges, including peer pressure, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy, among others.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Variables		Growth of Adolescent Students	Psychosocial Interventions
Growth of Adolescent Students	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	Pearson Correlation	.764**	1.000
Psychosocial Interventions	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

The results further indicated that growth of adolescent students and psychosocial interventions is positively and significantly related ($r = .764^{**}$, $p = 0.000$).

The study conducted a regression of coefficient analysis to establish the statistical significance relationship between the independent and dependent variable. The regression of coefficient results is as shown in below:

Table : Regression of Coefficients

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.638	0.195		3.275	0.001
Behavioural Interventions	0.234	0.068	0.270	3.424	0.001
Psychosocial Interventions	0.295	0.081	0.308	3.628	0.000

The study finds that there is statistical significant effect of psychosocial interventions on growth of adolescent students in public secondary schools ($\beta = 0.295$, $p = 0.000$).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMEDATION

Depression, anxiety disorder, emotional and behavioural difficulties, substance misuse, suicidal behaviour, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are among the psychosocial challenges exhibited by adolescent students in their schools. The study further found that both psychosocial interventions have a significant impact on the

growth of adolescents in public secondary institutions. The study recommends that there is a need to expand the capacity building efforts in this area. This may involve the incorporation of novel technologies or strategies to facilitate the effective implementation of such interventions.

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