

## The Influence of Parental Involvement on Depression Among Students in Public Secondary Schools in Tigania West, Meru County

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### Abstract

This study investigated the influence of parental involvement on students' depression in public secondary schools in Tigania West, Meru County, Kenya. The study sought to determine whether different dimensions of parental involvement act as protective factors against adolescent depression. The study was guided by Bowlby's Attachment Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and adopted a descriptive survey design using a quantitative approach. Data were collected from 173 students selected from five public secondary schools using the Student-Rated Parental School Involvement Questionnaire (SR-PSIQ) and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The findings revealed that 22.6% of the students exhibited depressive symptoms categorized as borderline, moderate, severe, or extreme depression, indicating a significant mental health concern. Parental involvement showed a statistically significant moderate negative correlation with depression ( $r = -0.260$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that higher parental involvement is associated with lower levels of depression. Among the dimensions of parental involvement, parental financial support ( $r = -0.240$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and parental involvement in school activities ( $r = -0.223$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ) were the strongest protective factors, while parent-student communication was not statistically significant. The study highlights the importance of tangible parental support in reducing depressive symptoms among adolescents. It recommends that policymakers, school administrators, and parents strengthen socioeconomic support systems and encourage structured parental engagement in school activities to enhance students' mental health and well-being.

**Keywords:** *Parental involvement, adolescent depression, secondary school students, mental health, Tigania West, Kenya*

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### 1. Introduction

Adolescent depression has become a growing global mental health concern, attracting increased attention from researchers and health professionals. Studies show that parental involvement plays a critical role in shaping adolescents' psychological well-being. Positive

parent–child relationships characterized by emotional support, trust, and open communication can protect adolescents from developing depression, while neglectful or abusive parental behavior increases their vulnerability to mental health problems (Pavlenko et al., 2021; Cong et al., 2020). Consequently, the quality of family relationships is widely recognized as a key determinant of adolescent mental health.

Globally, depression is one of the most common mental disorders among adolescents. It is estimated that about 10–20% of adolescents experience a mental health disorder, with many cases emerging before the age of 14 (Petito et al., 2020). According to the World Health Organization, depression affects approximately 280 million people worldwide, and adolescents and young adults are among the most affected groups (Santilli, 2023; WHO, 2024). In Kenya, depression cases have also been increasing, highlighting the need for greater attention to adolescent mental health and the factors that influence it.

Family environment and parental engagement are important protective factors against depression among adolescents. Research indicates that parental involvement, including monitoring academic activities, maintaining communication, and providing emotional and financial support, is associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms (Cao, 2021; Khasakhala et al., 2012). However, in the Kenyan context, parental participation in students' academic and emotional development has historically been limited, as education was often viewed primarily as the responsibility of schools (Muigai, 2018). Understanding how parental involvement influences adolescent depression is therefore important for developing effective interventions to improve students' mental health in secondary schools.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Khasakhala (2012) opines that a large percentage of secondary school students in Kenya experience depression, with estimates pegging it at 27% to 29% alongside a 31.1% suicide rate. Depression cases among students are linked to parental involvement. This decline in direct parental engagement has coincided with a rise in mental health concerns among adolescents, including depression. Research has shown that parental support is a key protective factor against adolescent depression, yet in Kenya, many adolescents feel discouraged from discussing mental health issues with their parents due to societal stigma and cultural norms (Ndeti et al., 2016).

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 provides for rights and freedoms, including the obligation of a parent. The Basic Education Act 2013, the Ministry of Education regulation, and other statutes together provide for the responsibility and protection of children in basic educational institutions, including secondary schools. All of these have been put in place to cater to students' interests as they progress through their education. The 8.4.4 system of education has also established guidance and counseling centers in schools to help deal with the wellness issues within the student fraternity. Parents have also been enlightened on their roles, especially in dealing with and handling teenage issues that may lead to serious depression.

While the influence of parents' involvement on a child's academic performance is well established, studies have yet to examine how parent involvement impacts a child's mental health, particularly depression. This research seeks to investigate the influence of parental involvement on depression among students in public secondary schools in Tigania West, Meru County.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

- i. Determined the relationship between parent-student communication and depression among students in public secondary schools in Tigania West, Meru County
- ii. Analysed the effect of parental financial support on depression among students in public secondary schools in Tigania West, Meru County.
- iii. Examined the influence of parental involvement in school activities on depression among students in public secondary schools in Tigania West, Meru County.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

Attachment Theory, developed by John Bowlby, explains that early relationships between children and their caregivers shape emotional development and psychological well-being. When parents provide consistent care, warmth, and responsiveness, children develop secure attachment, which promotes emotional stability, self-esteem, and resilience. In contrast, weak or inconsistent parental support may result in insecure attachment, which has been linked to emotional difficulties and higher risks of depression among adolescents (Bowlby, 1969; Bernaras et al., 2019; Spruit et al., 2020). In the context of this study, parental involvement, such as communication, guidance, and emotional support, strengthens secure attachment and may protect students from depression in public secondary schools in Tigania West, Meru County.

Ecological Systems Theory, proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, explains that human development is influenced by multiple environmental systems, including family, school, community, and wider societal structures. The theory highlights key levels, including the microsystem (family and school), mesosystem (interactions between home and school), exosystem (indirect influences such as parental employment and socioeconomic conditions), and macrosystem (cultural and societal values) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bigolin, 2021). In this study, parental involvement represents a critical microsystem factor influencing students' emotional well-being. Strong parent-child relationships and supportive home environments may reduce the likelihood of depression among students in public secondary schools in Tigania West, Meru County (Lakhan, 2013).

### 2.2 Empirical Review

#### 2.2.1 Parental communication

Multiple studies in socio-psychological communication research clearly show that child-parent dialogue serves as a protective factor when assessing adolescent depression. Ioffe et al. (2020) did a study with 1,200 adolescents from the USA. They learned that those who had open and supportive conversations with their parents showed 30% less depressive symptoms than their counterparts. This improvement in mental health quality was explicitly reported by 360 adolescents in the sample when their parents regularly engaged in emotionally supportive verbal exchanges with them.

In a similar vein, Hu and Zhou (2024), in their cohort study on 540 adolescents divided into two-year time-frame intervals, noted that adolescents whose parents consistently provided emotional support improved their emotional regulation by 25%. Solving the problem of the psychological impact of adolescence, these studies qualitatively document how emotional regulation and closeness with parents enable adolescents to develop defensive self-efficacy,

and that, in turn, defensive self-efficacy enables adolescents to use it effectively. Moreover, they report how the communication of parental reassurance defends them against psychological instability. Kapetanovic et al. (2020) have shown that in collectivist South Asian and Latin American cultures, where family ties are valued, diverse cultures tend to experience fewer changes in psychological distress levels compared to parents and children.

### **2.2.2 Parental Financial Support**

Studies across various nations have established the role of parental financial assistance as a key factor in reducing adolescent depression symptoms. According to Barnhart et al. (2022), adolescents from families with financial difficulties suffered from depression at a rate 45% higher than those from families with sufficient funds. This study included a sample of 3,000 adolescents across the United States, wherein 1,350 of the participants noted that financial problems were a primary reason for family untenable dynamics, which contributed positively to their mental health issues. In the same vein, income interruption in families was also noted to exacerbate adolescents' stress levels by Persson and Rossin-Slater (2018) within their cohort of 5,000 participants, with a significant 37% increase in depression elicited among stressed adolescents. The qualitative data from this research showed that financial hardship raised doubts about meeting fundamental needs, leading to stress and helplessness among adolescents. All these results point out the relationship between economic conditions and the mental well-being of adolescents, which makes it easier to conclude that parents' financial support ensures provisions and additional care that can prevent depression.

The connection in the African context between parental financial assistance and adolescents' mental well-being is equally apparent. Still, in most cases, it is influenced by broader economic and social factors. As reported by Baird et al. (2013), among 1,500 adolescents interviewed in Malawi and South Africa, job loss or crop failure increased the likelihood of depression by 22%. Within the same cohort, 330 adolescents reported feeling hopeless due to financial difficulties in their households. Abreu (2023) was explicit in the use of the case of South Africa to highlight challenges that adolescents face as a consequence of the South African socio-economic divide, which aggravates the existing mental health problems. Teachers who were interviewed in this study stated that 58% of their students from families with economic problems withdrew and performed poorly in school as signs of depression. According to Tozan and Capasso (2022), in their analysis of economic evidence, financially targeted or conditional cash transfers to adolescents reduced depression by 15% in sub-Saharan Africa, representing an economic improvement. These accounts are corroborated by accounts of adolescents that state even marginal improvement leads to stress relief and better family relationships, further reducing depression among adolescents.

### **2.2.3 Parental Involvement**

A significant number of researchers have put considerable effort into conducting an in-depth analysis of the correlation between parental involvement and its relevance to an adolescent's life. In the words of Cao (2021), Parents who offer mental assistance and support with the social skill-building process serve a great purpose in the lives of adolescents. Greater family contribution and encouragement are inversely proportional to the risks of a teenager undergoing delusional depression. Conversely, Wang and Sheik-Khalil (2014) argue that there is not enough research into the impact of school parental involvement on adolescent depression

related issues. Lowering the educational achievement, alongside worsening the academic performance, is a more evident impact that depression poses to adolescents.

Parental involvement in the achievement process may boost self-esteem and the ability to regulate emotions, so that adolescents would not have symptoms of depression. Good communication from parents and relationships during pro-social activities within a school setting are such contacts. Cong et al. (2020) began their study by noting that positive parental characteristics can positively influence children's upbringing. Some scholars argue that positive parenting characteristics and behaviors, including connectivity, bonding, engagement, and support, may also complement one another in enhancing a positive mental state and reducing the risk of depression. In this case, for instance, a study of adolescents permanently living in the US found that parent-child connectivity, as measured through looking at caring and communication, was linked to cases of depression five years later. One more example is the study conducted on Canadian children in the 9th and 10th grades, which discovered that parental oversight is a precursor to decreased symptoms of depression in adolescents three years later. The cumulative evidence proves that positive parenting practices do help in alleviating depression.

### **3. Methodology**

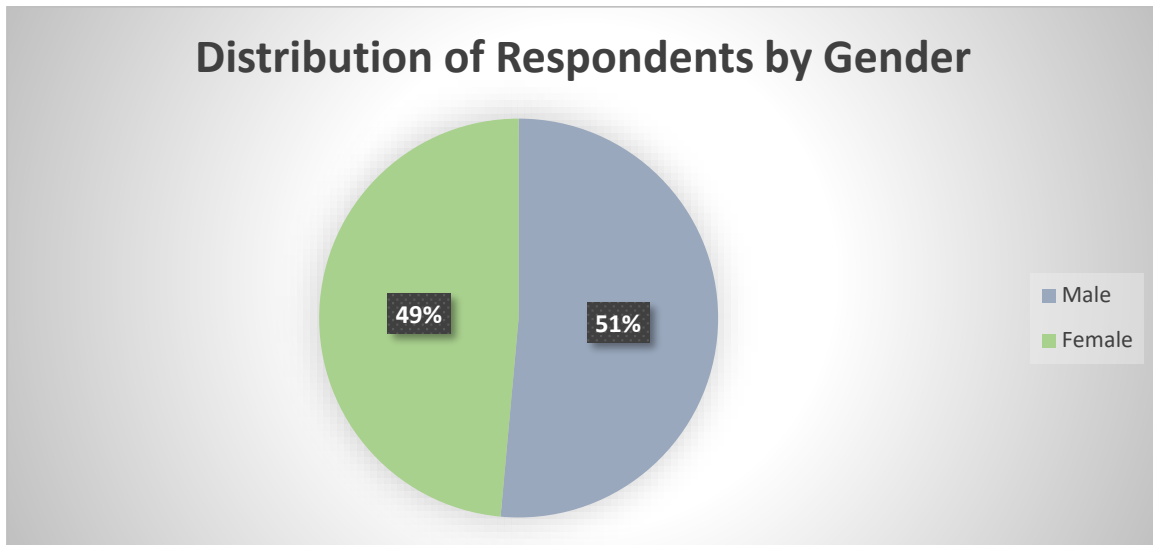
The study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of parental involvement on students' depression in public secondary schools in Tigania West, Meru County. The target population consisted of 962 students from five secondary schools in Akithi Zone. Using Yamane's formula, a sample size of 168 students was determined, and the sample was selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across the schools. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, specifically the student-Rated Parental School Involvement Questionnaire (SR-PSIQ) to measure parental involvement and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) to assess levels of depression among students.

The instruments were pretested to assess the clarity and suitability of the questionnaire items, while reliability was assessed using the test-retest method and Pearson's Product-Moment correlation. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 27, employing descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, as well as inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and regression analyses, to examine relationships between parental involvement and depression. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional review bodies, and participants were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation, confidentiality, and anonymity during data collection.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

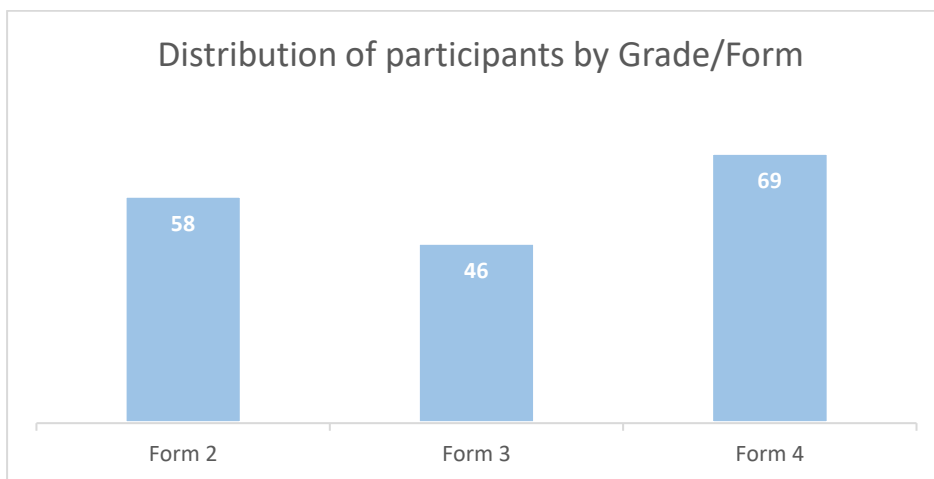
The study sample comprised 173 secondary school students, with 89 males (51.4%) and 84 females (48.6%), as shown in Figure 1. This represents a balanced gender distribution, allowing for meaningful comparisons across gender groups.



**Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by gender, percent**

Respondents' ages ranged from [14-21 years], with a mean age of 17 years (SD = 1.3). This age distribution is typical for secondary school students in Forms 1-4.

Students were drawn from three forms of secondary education (for the 2025 calendar year, there were no Form 1 students due to the transition to CBC education). The distribution across grade levels was as follows: Form 2, 58 students (33.5%), Form 3, 46 students (26.5%), and Form 4, 69 students (40%).



**Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by Form, count**

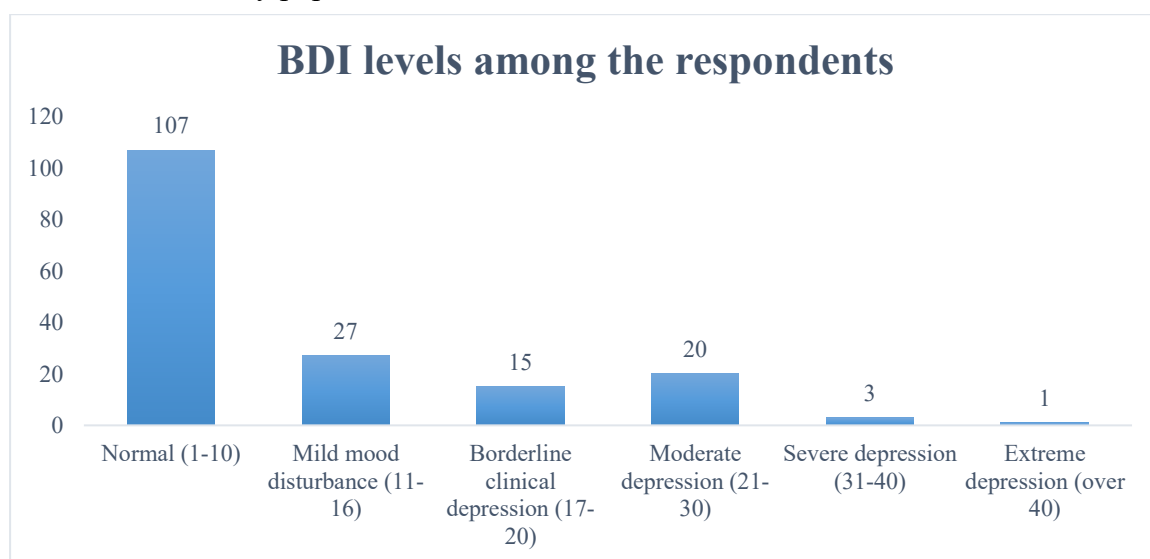
Participants attended either boarding or day schools, with 52 students (30.1%) from boarding schools and 121 students (69.9%) from day schools.

#### 4.2 Prevalence of Depression Among Students

Depression levels were assessed using Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI), which categorizes depression into various levels based on total scores. A total of 173 students completed the depression inventory. The findings revealed that the majority of students (61.8%, n=107)

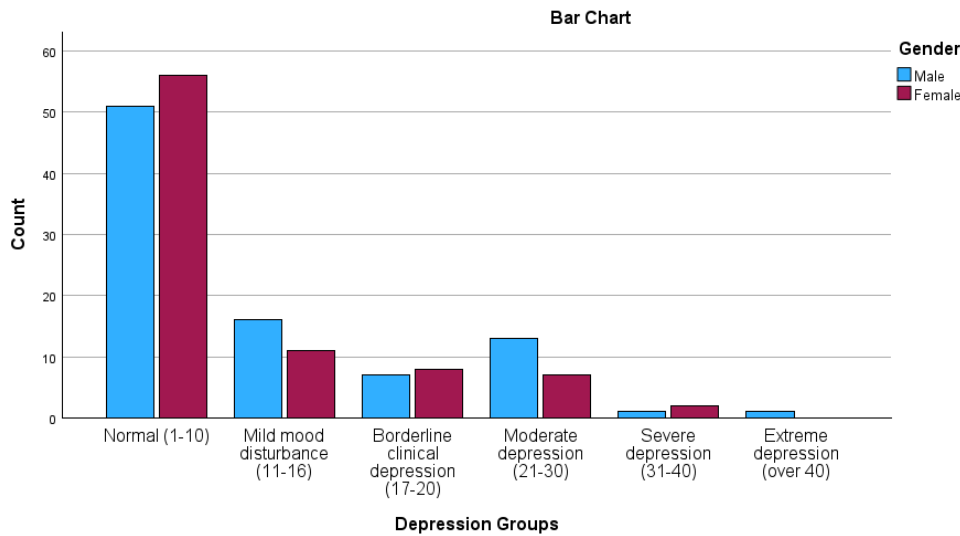
experienced normal ups and downs typical of adolescents. These students scored between 1 and 10 on the BDI, indicating no significant depressive symptoms.

However, a substantial portion of the sample (38.2%, n=66) showed symptoms ranging from mild mood disturbance to extreme depression. Specifically, 15.6% (n=27) of students reported mild mood disturbance, with scores ranging from 11 to 16. Additionally, 8.7% (n=15) exhibited borderline clinical depression (scores 17-20), while 11.6% (n=20) met criteria for moderate depression (scores 21-30). 1.7% (n=3) showed severe depression (scores 31-40), and 0.6% (n=1) demonstrated extreme depression (scores over 40). Collectively, 22.6% (n=39) of students exhibited symptoms of clinical concern (borderline clinical depression or higher), suggesting a notable prevalence of depression-related symptoms among secondary school students in the study population.



**Figure 3: Depression levels among the respondents**

An analysis of depression levels across gender revealed the distributions between male and female students. Among males, 57.3% (n=51) fell within the normal range, compared to 66.7% (n=56) of females. Regarding mild mood disturbance, 18.0% (n=16) of males and 13.1% (n=11) of females reported such symptoms. For borderline clinical depression, 7.9% (n=7) of males and 9.5% (n=8) of females fell into this category. Moderate depression was reported by 14.6% (n=13) of males and 8.3% (n=7) of females. Severe depression affected 1.1% (n=1) of just the same males and 2.4% (n=2) of females, while extreme depression was reported by one male student (1.1%) and no female students.



**Figure 3: Distribution of BDI measure by gender, count**

### 4.3 Levels of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement was measured across five dimensions using the Student-Rated Parental School Involvement Questionnaire (SR-PSIQ). The overall mean score for parental involvement was 51.6 (SD = 5.6), indicating high levels of parental involvement based on the scoring interpretation (High: 45-60; Moderate: 30-44; Low: 15-29). Among the five dimensions of parental involvement, parental expectations showed a mean score of 11.7 (SD=0.7), parent-child communication had a mean of 10.2 (SD = 1.9), homework supervision averaged 7.9 (SD = 2.5), school-based involvement scored 10.3 (SD = 1.9), and financial support had a mean of 11.3 (SD = 1.4).

Overall, these results suggest that students perceived their parents as highly involved in their education, particularly in setting expectations and providing financial support. While all dimensions reflected generally strong involvement, homework supervision scored relatively lower than other domains, suggesting that parents may prioritize broader guidance and support over direct monitoring of academic tasks.

**Table 1: Parental involvement measures descriptive statistics**

<i>Parental Involvement measure</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Parental Expectation	8	12	11.7	0.7
Parent-child Communication	5	12	10.2	1.9
Homework Supervision	3	12	7.9	2.5
School-based Involvement	3	12	10.3	1.9
Financial support	3	12	11.3	1.4
<b>Overall Parental Involvement</b>	31	60	51.4	5.6

#### 4.4 Correlation Analysis on the Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Depression

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the five dimensions of parental involvement and depression levels among students. The analysis included all 173 participants and revealed several significant relationships. Total parental involvement demonstrated a significant moderate negative correlation with depression ( $r = -0.260$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that higher overall parental involvement is associated with lower depression scores among students.

When examining individual dimensions, three specific aspects of parental involvement showed statistically significant negative correlations with depression. Homework supervision demonstrated a weak but significant negative correlation with depression ( $r = -0.176$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ). This indicates that students whose parents provide greater supervision and support with homework tend to report lower levels of depression. The practical implication of this finding is that parental engagement in academic work at home may serve as a protective factor against depressive symptoms.

School-based involvement showed a moderate negative correlation with depression ( $r = -0.223$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). Students whose parents actively participate in school activities, attend parent-teacher meetings, and maintain communication with teachers demonstrated significantly lower depression scores. This dimension showed a stronger relationship with depression than homework supervision, suggesting that parents' visible presence and engagement in the school environment may be particularly important for students' emotional well-being.

Financial support showed the strongest correlation with depression among the individual dimensions ( $r = -0.240$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). This negative relationship suggests that students who receive adequate financial support for basic needs, school expenses, and extracurricular activities experience lower levels of depression. The strength of this relationship highlights the important role that economic security and material support play in adolescent mental health.

Two dimensions of parental involvement did not show statistically significant relationships with depression. Parental expectations demonstrated virtually no correlation with depression ( $r = -0.005$ ,  $p = 0.951$ ), suggesting that parents' academic expectations alone do not directly impact students' depressive symptoms. Similarly, parent-child communication showed a non-significant negative correlation with depression ( $r = -0.106$ ,  $p = 0.164$ ). While this relationship was in the expected direction, it did not reach statistical significance, suggesting that the quality or frequency of communication about school matters may not directly influence levels of depression in the same way that more tangible forms of support do.

The correlation analysis also revealed significant positive relationships among the parental involvement dimensions themselves. Parent-child communication showed strong positive correlations with homework supervision ( $r = 0.421$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and moderate correlations with school-based involvement ( $r = 0.243$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and financial support ( $r = 0.231$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Homework supervision was strongly correlated with school-based involvement ( $r = 0.441$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and financial support ( $r = 0.411$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These intercorrelations suggest that parents who engage in one form of involvement tend to engage in others, indicating a pattern of overall parental engagement rather than isolated involvement in specific areas.

**Table 2: Correlation analysis table**

Variables	Depression	Parental Expectation	Parental Child Communication	Homework Supervision	School-based Involvement	Financial Support	Parental Involvement
Depression	1						
Parental Expectation	-0.005	1					
Parental Child Communication	-0.106	0.204**	1				
Homework Supervision	-0.176*	0.156*	0.434**	1			
School-based Involvement	-0.223**	0.039	0.235**	0.441**	1		
Financial Support	-0.240**	0.225**	0.231**	0.211**	0.197**	1	
Parental Involvement	-0.250**	0.335**	0.699**	0.815**	0.669**	0.519**	1

#### 4.5 Predictive Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Depression

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether parental involvement, along with demographic variables (gender and school type), could predict depression levels among students. The model included three predictor variables: total parental involvement score, gender (male/female), and school type (boarding/day school). The regression model was statistically significant ( $F=5.19$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.002$ ), indicating that the predictor variables collectively explain a significant portion of variance in depression scores among secondary school students. The  $R^2$  value of 0.29 suggests that approximately 29% of the variance in depression is explained by the predictor variables in the model.

The regression analysis revealed that parental involvement emerged as a significant negative predictor of depression ( $B = -0.421$ ,  $t = -3.665$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in parental involvement score, depression scores decreased by 0.421 points, holding other variables constant. This finding provides strong evidence that higher levels of parental engagement in their children's education and well-being are associated with lower depressive symptoms.

Gender did not emerge as a significant predictor of depression in the model ( $B = -0.602$ ,  $SE = 1.244$ ,  $\beta = -0.036$ ,  $t = -0.484$ ,  $p = .629$ ). This indicates that male and female students in this sample did not differ significantly in their depression levels when parental involvement and school type were controlled for.

School type (boarding versus day school) was also statistically insignificant at the 0.05 level ( $B = 2.666$ ,  $t = 1.931$ ,  $p = .055$ ). The positive coefficient suggests a trend where boarding school

students may experience slightly higher depression scores compared to day school students, with an estimated difference of approximately 2.67 points on the depression scale. The marginal significance suggests that school type may play a role in student depression, possibly related to separation from family or the boarding school environment.

The constant term in the regression equation was 32.047 ( $t = 5.406, p < .001$ ), representing the expected depression score when all predictor variables are at zero. This significant constant indicates a baseline level of depression when accounting for the model's predictor variables.

**Table 3: Regression analysis results**

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	32.047	5.928		5.406	<.001
	Gender	-.602	1.244	-.036	-.484	.629
	Boarding school	2.666	1.381	.146	1.931	.055
	ParentalInvolvement_Total	-.421	.115	-.279	-3.665	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Depression\_Total

## 4.6 Discussion

### 4.6.1 Overall Parental Involvement and Depression

The study showed that total parental involvement was significantly associated with depression among secondary school students. This suggests that higher levels of parental involvement were linked to fewer depression symptoms. These findings are consistent with those of Cao (2021) and Cong et al. (2020), who found that healthy parenting behaviors, such as monitoring, bonding, and emotional support, reduce the risk of adolescent depression. The findings also support Bowlby's Attachment Theory, which emphasizes the function of secure parent-child interactions in promoting emotional resilience, as well as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes family as a critical protective factor in the microsystem.

### 4.6.2 Financial Support and Depression

Financial support was identified as the largest negative predictor of depression in this study. Students who received consistent support from their parents reported fewer depressive symptoms than those from financially challenged homes. This finding is consistent with Barnhart et al. (2022) in the United States and Ndeti et al. (2022) in Kenya, who reported that socioeconomic security is directly related to adolescents' well-being. Similarly, Tozan and Capasso (2022) found that cash transfer programs in Sub-Saharan Africa significantly reduced adolescent depression. These findings emphasize the importance of parental financial support in Tigania West, not only for addressing basic requirements but also for psychological stability.

### 4.6.3 School-Based Involvement and Depression

Parental involvement in school activities was also connected with depression. Students whose parents attended school meetings and communicated with teachers had lower depression scores. This research aligns with Muleya et al. (2020) in Zambia and Mukami et al. (2024) in Nakuru County, who found that parental involvement in school activities improves adolescents'

emotional well-being and sense of belonging. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, mesosystem interactions, connections between home and school, have a positive effect on adolescent mental health.

#### **4.6.4 Homework Supervision and Depression**

Homework supervision turned out to have a weak but significant negative connection with depression. This implies that parents who monitor their children's academic performance help to reduce depressive symptoms. Wairimu, Macharia, and Muiru (2016) revealed similar findings, indicating that parental monitoring was associated with higher self-esteem and lower depression among Kenyan teenagers. This implies that active parental assistance at home makes adolescents feel more supported academically and emotionally.

#### **4.6.5 Parental Expectations and Communication**

In this study, parental expectations and communication showed no statistically significant link with depression. While the correlations were in the expected negative direction, they were insufficient to establish a convincing relationship. This contrasts with Ioffe et al. (2020) in the United States and Bireda & Pillay (2018) in Ethiopia, both of whom stressed the protective function of parent-child communication. In the Tigania West culture, communication between parents and children may be more focused on academics than emotional well-being, limiting its direct impact on depression. Similarly, Wang and Sheik-Khalil (2014) observed that while parental expectations may promote academic accomplishment, they may not always protect adolescents against depressive symptoms.

#### **4.6.6 Gender and School Type as Moderators**

The regression analysis showed that gender was not a significant predictor of depression, implying that both boys and girls experienced similar levels of depressive symptoms when parental engagement was taken into account. The results are consistent with Alves et al. (2021), who found similar depression risks across genders when parental assistance was inadequate. School type was marginally significant, with boarding school students reporting slightly higher depression scores than day scholars. This trend could be explained by a disconnect from family support systems, which is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological idea that disrupting microsystem connections, such as everyday parent-child interactions, can increase vulnerability to depression.

### **5. Conclusion**

Based on the synthesis of the findings, the study draws the following conclusions regarding the influence of parental involvement on depression among secondary school students in Tigania West:

The core conclusion of this research is that overall parental involvement acts as a vital protective factor against adolescent depression, supporting both Bowlby's Attachment Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Higher levels of engagement across domains are associated with lower depressive symptoms.

For students in Tigania West, the tangible and visible forms of parental involvement—namely, financial support and active school engagement—are the most powerful and reliable factors in reducing depression. Financial stability addresses immediate sources of stress and insecurity,

while school involvement creates a positive mesosystem link between home and school, enhancing the student's sense of belonging and support.

The non-significant finding regarding parent-child communication suggests that mere frequency or academic focus is insufficient to mitigate depression. A conclusion is drawn that, for communication to serve as an effective protective buffer, it must be restructured to emphasize emotional sharing, active listening, and discussions of mental health, rather than focusing primarily on academic performance or logistical matters.

The marginal significance of the school type suggests that students in boarding institutions may be at a slightly increased risk of depression, likely due to the decreased frequency of direct parental interaction, confirming the importance of the family microsystem connection.

## **6. Recommendations**

Based on the study's significant findings, the following recommendations are proposed for stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, school administration, parents, and community leaders:

### **6.6.1 Policy and Community Recommendations**

Given the strong link between financial support and reduced depression, relevant government agencies and non-governmental organizations should prioritize programs offering targeted conditional cash transfers or subsidies for school fees and basic needs to financially challenged families in Tigrania West. This directly addresses the most significant risk factor identified.

School administrators, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, should proactively develop and implement structured programs to increase parents' visible involvement. These should include flexible hours for Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, interactive workshops on child emotional support (not just academic progress), and explicit invitations for parents to attend non-academic school events.

### **6.6.2 Parent and School-Level Recommendations**

Schools and guidance departments should conduct parenting workshops focused on emotional literacy. The goal should be to shift parent-child conversations from being purely academic or directive to being emotionally supportive, emphasizing active listening, validation of feelings, and open discussion of mental health challenges.

Secondary schools, especially boarding schools, should establish enhanced internal support systems. This could include a mandatory, structured weekly check-in system by a trained counselor or patron/matron, and scheduled "parent connection hours" to mitigate the emotional vulnerability caused by separation from the microsystem.

School guidance departments should implement routine, confidential depression screening for all students, particularly those identified as high-risk (e.g., those from low-income families or older students), followed by immediate referral to counselling services, as recommended by the empirical literature.

### **6.6.3 Recommendations for Further Research**

To build upon the findings of this study and address its limitations, the following areas are recommended for future research:

A qualitative study using in-depth interviews or focus groups is needed to examine the quality and content of parent-child communication in the Tigania West context. This would help explain why the quantitative measure of communication did not show a significant relationship with depression and would isolate the emotional factors at play.

Future research should specifically investigate the mediating and moderating role of the boarding school environment on depression. This would involve longitudinal studies tracking students from day school entry to boarding school entry to isolate the causal impact of the institutional environment and explore protective factors within the school setting itself.

A comparative study would help determine the generalizability of the findings and confirm whether financial support remains the strongest predictor of mental health across diverse settings. Replicate this research in different socio-economic contexts across Kenya (e.g., an affluent urban county versus another rural county).

A longitudinal intervention study should be conducted where schools implement a comprehensive parental involvement program (focusing on emotional communication and financial counseling support) and track the subsequent changes in adolescent depression scores over a period of 12-24 months.

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