

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, COPING
STRATEGIES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG JUNIOR
SCHOOL LEARNERS IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA**

BEATRICE N MUGAMBI

**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling
Psychology of Chuka University.**

OCTOBER, 2024

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for any award of diploma or conferment of a degree in this or any other University.

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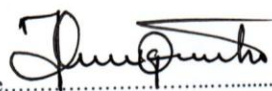
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents; the late Festus Mugambi and my loving mother Alice Gaiti, my siblings Samuel Mutwiri, Timothy Muriungi, Hellen Kanyamu, Lydia Kinanu and Susan Gacheri.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the almighty God for giving me the gift of life and good health in the entire period of this study. I am very grateful to the Management of Chuka University for giving me the opportunity to undertake my PhD degree in the university. I express my heartfelt gratitude to Chuka University lecturers who were dedicated in their teaching and guidance.

Special appreciation goes to my two supervisors, Dr. John Otieno Ogembo and Dr. Grace Gatune Murithi for their invaluable advice, continuous support, inspiration, patience and assistance at every stage of my academic research.

Special thanks go to the County Director of Education, Tharaka Nithi County Mrs. Bridget Wambua for availing to me the statistics of learners and teachers in Junior Schools and also for granting me permission to collect data.

I also express my sincere gratitude to the Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers in Tharaka Nithi County, the grade 8 class teachers and grade 8 learners of the sampled Junior Schools for their cooperation in participating as respondents in this research.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the head teachers of Junior Schools that were sampled for allowing me to administer to the questionnaires to their learners and teachers. I also recognize the support of Ann Karimi and Michael Gitonga. To my friends Joyce Mghoi and Ruth Manyara thank you for cheering me on.

Finally, I thank everyone else who offered assistance, advice and support in my research process. The completion of this work has been made possible by your support. Rest assured that I greatly appreciate you all and may God bless you abundantly.

ABSTRACT

Junior School, a phase of competence based curriculum in Kenya bridges the gap between upper primary and senior secondary schooling. Its implementation though still in the nascent stage continues to face a number of challenges. Some negatively impacting on the psychological wellbeing of the learners. Studies that seek to provide solutions to the challenges are therefore necessary to contribute in providing solutions and thus contributing to a turnaround in the psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. This study sought to establish the relationship between school environment, coping strategies and psychological well-being among learners in Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey and correlational research designs. The target population for this study were the learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi, County, Kenya. The study sampled 377 respondents comprising of 328 grade 8 learners, 42 grade 8 class teachers and 7 Sub- County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Stratified sampling was used to identify the schools of different categories, purposive sampling was used to select the Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers while simple random sampling was used at the school level to choose grade 8 learners and class teachers. Data was collected using a psychometric test instrument for the learners, a questionnaire for the class teachers and an interview schedule for the Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Validity of research instruments was ensured by seeking expert opinions from Chuka University supervisors and other research experts. Reliability was ascertained through Cronbach analysis of data obtained from a pilot study carried among 53 respondents sampled from the neighboring Kitui County. Qualitative data obtained through interviews were analyzed thematically while quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 computer software. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were used to describe the existing relationship between the variables while study hypotheses were tested using logistic regression at 0.05 level of significance. The study established a positive and significant relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. School physical environment as an aspect of school environment was found to be positively and significantly related to junior school learners' psychological wellbeing while schools' social and emotional environment were negatively and significantly related with learners' psychological wellbeing. The study also established that coping strategies such as problem focus and social support services moderates the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. It is therefore recommended that public junior school managements in collaboration with other education stakeholders should put in place strategies aimed at strengthening aspects of school environment in order to foster junior school learners' psychological wellbeing. Specifically, they should put in place strategies aimed at improving the quality and quantity of junior school physical facilities and learning resources, launch and monitor turn-around initiatives aimed at fostering quality school social environment and design and implement turn-around interventions focusing on the junior school emotional environment to enable learners cope better with the emotional environment. They should also improve programs that aid junior school learners to cope better with the possible adverse influence of school environment on their psychological wellbeing.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANOVA:	Analysis of Variance
ASE:	Academic Self-Efficacy
BECF:	Basic Education Curriculum Framework
CBC:	Competency-Based Curriculum
CSI:	Coping Strategy Indicator
EFA:	Exploratory Factor Analysis
ICT:	Information Communication and Technology
JS	Junior School
KICD:	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KPSEA:	Kenya Primary School Education Assessment
MoE:	Ministry of Education
NACOSTI:	National Commission of Technology, Science, and Innovation
PWPER:	Presidential Working Party on Education Reforms
RPWBS:	Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SES:	School Environment Scale
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TSC:	Teachers Service Commission
SQASO:	Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer
UK:	United Kingdom
UNESCO:	United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VIF:	Variance Inflation Factor
WHO:	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Middle schools play an important role in the development of adolescents. They provide a context in which learners learn implicitly and explicitly about themselves and relationships (Dodge & Sherrill, 2006). They also learn how to navigate the turbulent waters of early adolescence. The level of the school learners' psychological well-being is considered as an indicator of the social welfare and a measure of the educational systems effectiveness (Barger et al, 2009, Huebner & Hills, 2015, Heffner & Antaramian, 2016). It includes relationships with oneself, social involvement, motivation and positive interactions with other people (Huebner et al, Suldo, Smith, McKnight & Life, 2012). Learners' well-being is closely associated with a positive school environment, which involves the social and academic adaptation of learners (Huebner et al 2012). According to World Health Organization (2022), mental and psychological illnesses are increasing in society and schools are not spared. The school environment provides sources of stress as well as sources of resilience for the learners. Therefore, promoting learners' psychological wellbeing is a global priority and schools have an important role to play in ensuring that the learners develop adaptive coping strategies.

Junior Schools play a crucial role in the education system of various countries, serving as a transitional phase between primary and secondary education for learners. Junior schools are meant to provide a conducive learning environment for learners transitioning from primary to secondary education prioritizing learners' welfare and a smooth transfer to senior secondary schools. (Liu et al, 2021). In the field of well-being and education, there is a consensus that gaining academic knowledge on its own is not enough for children and young people to become active citizens as adults (Cefai et al 2021). Education needs to go beyond limited goals such as academic achievement to promote children's and young people's well-being. Children should develop the necessary social and emotional competencies to navigate successfully through the challenges and transitions they will meet when growing up into adulthood. The ages of junior secondary school learners are very special in psychosocial development since the transition age coincides with pre-adolescence,

which is a critical stage in their cognitive development. They need keen attention during their puberty and teenage in order to facilitate imagination and creativity.

In a highly competitive society, learners face increasing life pressures, leading to a growing concern about their psychological well-being. Psychological well-being equips learners to cope with environmental challenges effectively. Conversely, learners with compromised psychological well-being are more susceptible to experiencing depression and anxiety (Waters et al, 2022). The prevalence of psychological well-being issues among learners, including high mental stress, has been widely reported in various educational settings (He, 2018). To capture the multidimensional nature of psychological well-being, Ryff (2008) proposed a framework encompassing various intersecting aspects such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive associations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. Similarly, Rehman, Bhuttah & You (2020) discovered a significant association between psychological wellbeing and academic accomplishment, suggesting implications for overall learner satisfaction. This implies that for learners to achieve academic goals successfully they need to be psychological healthy.

Coping with the stress of environment can influence mental health and psychological wellbeing of learners. Psychological wellbeing focuses on the positive and negative emotions and decreases negative moods (Carvalho, & Dias, 2021). Coping strategies, which encompass individuals' responses to daily challenges, involve both positive and negative experiences, as outlined by Cicchetti and Bendezú (2023). Handley et al (2020) further categorize coping strategies into active and passive forms, underscoring the importance of recognizing diverse responses to different situations. Cognitive, behavioral and emotional components are integral aspects of coping strategies that require awareness and efforts to mitigate adverse outcomes.

Researchers such as Brouzos et al. (2020) delve into the efficacy of coping strategies, particularly concerning educational transitions, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches for learners. Lee and Syaid (2017) also found that learners often grapple with depression in uncomfortable learning environments as well as challenges in interactions with parents, friends and teachers, highlighting the pivotal role of coping

strategies in influencing stress levels and psychological wellbeing. The findings of Carnicer et al (2019) regarding coping strategies' role in stress management and academic success are reiterated by Rehman et al. (2020), who also assert that positive perceptions of the learning environment correlate with higher academic achievement, underscoring the intrinsic link between psychological wellbeing and educational success.

Further, when learners have a clear understanding of their objectives and aspirations, they may be more inclined to develop effective coping strategies to navigate academic and personal challenges (Gustems & Calderón, 2013). This connection between goal clarity and coping mechanisms can influence how learners respond to stressors and setbacks, ultimately influencing their psychological well-being (Seiffge-Krenke, 2015). This implies that schools that prioritize goal-setting and individualized support are likely to foster a positive atmosphere conducive to learning, growth and well-being.

Learners face growing challenges in the form of intense competition and increasing life pressures, leading to concerns about their psychological well-being. In the United States, junior secondary education is a vital phase in the educational journey of adolescents, providing a bridge between elementary and high school education. As demonstrated by extensive research, positive school environments have been recognized as essential for learner well-being (Bear, 2011). With increasing pressure on American learners to excel academically and cope with various life challenges, concerns about psychological well-being have grown (Waters et al., 2022). The educational landscape in the U.S. is diverse, with varying approaches to junior secondary education across states. In the US and many other developed countries such as Canada, UK, Germany Italy and France, learners' mental health is a priority (Getmiri, 2019). They have a qualified school psychologist or a counselor as mandatory personnel in all basic institutions of learning (Kwaah et al 2023). In addition to career and life skills counseling, the school psychologists perform mandatory psychological tests for placement of learners in special programmes, thus assisting learners to choose their career paths.

Countries in Europe have diverse educational systems, each with its unique approach to junior secondary education. However, the importance of fostering a positive school environment is a common thread across the continent (Cefai et al 2022). Research conducted in European countries, such as Finland, emphasizes the role of learner well-being and the learning environment in enhancing academic success. The influence of psychological well-being on academic outcomes has been a topic of interest for European researchers (Väisänen et al, 2017). Another study by Galanti (2016) established the relationship between school environment and psychological health of Swedish Junior High School learners and found out that school emotional and social environments have strong associations with psychological health of learners.

A study carried out by Hinze (2023) in the United Kingdom's (UK) Junior Secondary schools evidenced that better learner-rated school environment, at the learner and school level was associated with lower risk of depression, fewer social-emotional-behavioral difficulties and higher wellbeing in young people. Positive interactions are crucial for promoting wellness and preventing the emergence of mental health issues among students, as this research shows. According to data from extensive research on psychological wellbeing in the UK, mental health issues are the leading cause of disability in the country (World Health Organization, 2022). Positive relationships are essential for young people's psychological wellbeing at school and are essential to any whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Similarly, the Australia's educational system includes the middle or junior secondary school phase, which caters for learners in the 12-14 age group. The country strongly emphasizes fostering a supportive school climate that enhances learner well-being (Baruah, 2022). Australian researchers have explored the connections between the learning environment, psychological well-being and academic achievement. The research pointed out that a conducive school climate is vital for the learners' psychological wellbeing and academic achievement (Amholt et al, 2020). These views of the global practice offer valuable insights into how different countries address the psychological well-being of learners in their Junior Schools and gives a guide on what other countries can implement. Australian studies provide valuable insights into the impact of psychological well-being on learners' academic

performance, shedding light on the significance of the school environment in the Australian context.

China, with its vast and diverse education systems, presents a distinctive viewpoint on the relationship between school environment and the psychological well-being of Junior Secondary School learners. With immense academic pressure and competition, Chinese learners often face psychological well-being challenges (Waters et al., 2022). Researchers in China have examined the role of school environments in mitigating or exacerbating these challenges (Ahmad, 2018). They found out that learners who perceived a more positive school climate had increased psychological wellbeing, which, in turn, decreased their depressive symptoms (Zhang & Mohammaddokht, 2023). The findings show that there is a positive correlation between positive school climate and learners' psychological wellbeing.

The importance of fostering positive school environments for learner well-being is acknowledged across Africa. Several African countries have identified the need to address their learners' mental health and well-being (Malik et al, 2017). According to UNICEF (2019), five percent of the population below 15 years suffer mental disorders in the African region. Additionally, WHO (2018) strongly urged African nations to focus on psychological wellbeing of children and adolescents for regular checks that would ensure early detection and management since they spend most of their time in school. The psychological health of learners presents a major public health concern worldwide due to the magnitude of psychological problems that adversely affect the learners and the general society.

According to a study by Ngwokabuenui (2015), students in Cameroon secondary schools engaged in disruptive behaviours primarily because of cramped classrooms, an unfavorable school climate, a lack of enforcement of rules and regulations, subpar instruction, and ineffective administration. These elements produced a state of indiscipline that drove the students to create turmoil and disorder. Research on Malawi's school environment follow continental and worldwide trends, highlighting the importance of this setting in determining students' academic performance and general well-being.

In Central Africa, Ndayishimiye and Mukarugwiza (2021) in Burundi examined the role of learning resources in promoting students' well-being. The findings revealed that schools with access to high-quality educational materials and technologies provided a supportive learning environment that enhanced students' psychological well-being. They advocated for community involvement in supporting school resource acquisition.

In East Africa, countries such as Tanzania and Uganda have the middle school education systems in place. Various factors, including curriculum changes, teacher training, and resource allocation, shape learners' challenges in this region. The challenges have been identified as significant determinants of the psychological well-being of Junior School learners (Muchira et al, 2023). Studies conducted in East Africa provide insights into the impact of these challenges on learners' mental wellness. The studies indicate that there is a correlation between the school environment and psychological health among learners (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018). Researchers and policymakers have therefore recognized the potential impact of the school environment on learners' overall satisfaction and self-efficacy.

In Kenya, the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF) launched in 2017, promotes inclusive, holistic and quality education. It reflects the government's recognition of the importance of social and emotional competencies for learners. BECF seeks to unlock learners' potential for them to become empowered and ethical citizens (KICD 2017). It offers a fresh perspective of basic education and if properly implemented it could fundamentally alter the current understanding of what secondary schools ought to be in many ways. The implicit assumption is that learners will be well equipped with basic knowledge to choose a career path by the time they turn 14 or 15 years of age.

The Junior School curriculum is expected to cater for the diverse requirements of learners. However, according to the Ministry of Education (2023), the implementation of Junior Schools brought to light significant challenges related to large enrollments, infrastructure, curriculum adaptation, lack of teacher training opportunities and funding. There is also inadequate teaching and learning resources, poor teacher-

learner ratio, inadequate Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills and lack of clear assessment standardization (Kaseve et al, 2022)

One noteworthy recommendation from the Presidential Working Party on Education Reforms (PWPER) was domiciling Junior Schools within primary schools in order to optimize resource utilization (Gichurur, 2024). While this approach may be efficient in terms of sharing facilities, it poses an additional unique challenge to the perception of the school environment (Inyega et al, 2021). Junior School learners may not distinguish between primary and secondary schooling. Another distinct challenge according to Asghar et al (2022) is that the learners are taught by a blend of primary school and Junior schoolteachers who have a diverse training orientation. This may cause stress and confusion to the learners influencing their psychological wellbeing. Hako et al (2023) also aver that psychosocial adjustment of Junior School learners poses a challenge due to frequent changes effected by the Ministry of Education. These challenges may have significant implications on the psychological well-being of Junior School learners in Kenya.

The confusion, uncertainty, and rapid changes associated with the Middle School level impact the psychological wellbeing of learners leading to development of diverse coping mechanisms (Alam, 2022). Numerous studies have looked into the relationship between academic achievement and school environment as well as the impact of academic stress on teenager's psychological wellbeing. For instance, Klapp et al (2023) explored the relationship between learners' well-being and academic achievement in Swedish compulsory schools. Rudolf and Lee (2023) investigated school climate, academic performance and adolescent well-being in Korea while Cheng and Lin (2023) interrogated mechanisms from academic stress to subjective well-being of Chinese adolescents.

Other studies have looked at challenges facing the effective implementation of CBC in various counties in Kenya. (Sifuna and Obonyo 2019, Hussein 2023, Wawire, Morris & Muchira 2023, Mwang'ombe 2021, Mulangi 2024, Kubai 2023, Omariba 2022, Momanyi 2019, Gichurur 2024). None of the studies has focused on the relationship between school environments and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners and the effect of coping strategies, yet

psychological well-being of learners is very crucial. By addressing these gaps in research, a study on school environment, coping strategies and psychological well-being of Junior School learners can contribute to the development of targeted interventions and policies to support learners' holistic development and well-being.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Junior School stage prepares learners for senior secondary education. The core tenets of CBC system such as imagination and creativity, critical thinking and problem solving and self-efficacy must start manifesting at this stage. To fulfill their potential, learners at this stage necessitate a conducive environment that supports their holistic development to ensure that the transition is safe, strong and consistent for all learners. The school environment is very crucial to the psychological wellbeing of learners and there is need to ascertain how the school environment influences the Junior School learners' psychological wellbeing.

There is Inadequate understanding regarding how the school environment and coping strategies impact the psychological well-being of learners in Junior Schools in Kenya. Observations and anecdotal evidence from educators and psychologists indicate that current school environments and coping strategies may not adequately support learners' psychological well-being. The school environment is very crucial to the psychological wellbeing of learners and there is need to ascertain how the school environment influences the Junior School learners' psychological wellbeing

When the coping strategies are identified, teachers and counselors can eliminate the maladaptive strategies and enhance the adaptive strategies thereby helping learners to develop resilience and a sense of well-being. By comprehending the influence of the school environment on the psychological wellbeing among the learners, it is feasible to pinpoint areas in need of development and provide well-informed suggestions for establishing a more favorable and encouraging school environment and effective coping strategies.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between school environment, coping strategies and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i) To establish the relationship between school physical environment and psychological wellbeing among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.
- ii) To determine the relationship between school social environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.
- iii) To examine the relationship between school emotional environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.
- iv) To establish the influence of coping strategies on the relationship between school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

1.5 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided this study:

- H₀1:** There is no statistically significant relationship between school physical environment and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.
- H₀2:** There is no statistically significant relationship between school social environment and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.
- H₀3:** There is no statistically significant relationship between school emotional environment and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.
- H₀4:** Coping Strategies do not have a statistically significant influence on the relationship between the school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Learners in Junior Schools are the primary beneficiaries of this research. By better understanding how the school environment influences their psychological well-being, learners can gain insights that empower them to make informed decisions about their education and well-being.

The results of this study will be very beneficial to the Ministry of Education's policy makers. The research results can be valuable to inform policy development and enhancements related to learner well-being and the school environment. It will offer guidance on refining existing policies and identify improvement areas, contributing to a more robust and responsive learning environment.

The study aligns with the eighth national goal of education, emphasizing the inculcation of values related to physical and psychosocial well-being for both the individual and the community. By investigating the relationship between school environments and psychological well-being, this research directly contributes to advancing this goal by providing insights that promote learners' mental health and emotional stability.

The results will be useful to the guidance and counseling teachers by highlighting the adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies used by learners. This can be a reference point as they implement guidance and counseling in schools as outlined in the guidelines for implementing Junior Schools in Kenya.

Finally, the study offers a valuable resource for researchers in education, counseling and psychology by providing empirical data on the status of psychological wellbeing of learners in Junior Schools, not only in Tharaka Nithi County but also within the broader Kenyan context. Researchers can draw from this information to further their understanding of the factors influencing learners' well-being, allowing for more focused and data-driven research in these fields.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This research was conducted in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, encompassing seven sub-counties: Meru South, Muthambi, Maara, Igamba Ngombe, Ciakariga, Tharaka North and Tharaka South. These sub-counties served as the focal points for this research. The study sought to establish the relationship between the school environment and the psychological wellbeing and the influence of coping strategies on the relationship. The respondents were grade 8 learners. Grade 8 class teachers and Sub county Quality Assurance and Standards officers. The grade eight learners had stayed for at least one year since they shifted to Junior Schools so they may be experiencing less transition anxiety. The grade 8 learners were also better placed to identify the stress resulting from the school environment as well as the coping strategies. They grade 8 class teachers were preferred because the level of education being in the early stages of implementation, they may be playing all the roles including that of guidance and counseling .The Sub county Quality Assurance and Standards officers were preferred because they are in charge of quality education. As they evaluate academic programs they may as well feature on the psychological wellbeing of learners.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study faced the following limitations:

- i. The study relied on self-reported data from both teachers and learners. A limitation associated with self-reporting is that individuals may provide more favorable assessments of themselves, potentially inflating their ratings. The researcher explained to the respondents the importance of giving honest answers.
- ii. The literature to be reviewed on junior schools was limited in the library since this level of basic education is in the initial stages of implementation in the country .To address this limitation additional literature was accessed from e-materials

1.9 Assumptions of the Study.

The research was based on the following key assumptions:

- i. The study assumed that junior school grade 8 learners can identify and recognize the various school environmental factors that influence their psychological well-being.
- ii. The study also assumed that there is a relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing among learners, and that coping strategies moderate the relationship.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

The following is the operational definition of the terms used in this study:

Coping Strategy	The specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that learners employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events.
Emotional Wellbeing	The ability of a learner to produce positive emotions, moods, thoughts, and feelings, and adapt when confronted with adversity and stressful situations.
Junior School (JS)	Junior School is the phase of learning between primary school and senior secondary school.
Mental Health	Mental health refers to learner's emotional, psychological and social well-being.
Middle School	A school between upper primary and senior Secondary schools. In Kenya it includes grades 7, 8 and 9.
Psychological wellbeing	Psychological well-being refers to the overall mental health, emotional stability and satisfaction with school environment among learners in Junior schools.
Psychological Health	The psychological health refers to the way learners think, feel, relate and exist in school.
School Connectedness	Beliefs by learners that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as

individuals

School environment	The sum total of all the physical, social, emotional and mental factors that contributes to psychological wellbeing among Junior School learners.
Self-Acceptance	Relates to learners' ability to embrace their identity, strengths and weaknesses without excessive self-criticism.
Self-awareness	Self-awareness is the competency of how feelings, ideas, and moral principles affect a learner's performance in various settings, including the family or the classroom.
Self-Efficacy	The confidence a learner has in their ability to carry out the actions required to achieve particular performance goals.
Social Environment	The network of relationships, interactions, and peer dynamics that learners experience in school. It includes friendships, support systems, and social integration within the school community.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Psychological Well-being and School Environment

Psychological well-being, as the central focus of this study, constitutes a multifaceted construct within the educational context. This section comprehensively explored its essential dimensions, relevance in educational settings and universal applicability. The dimensions of psychological well-being discussed are essential in comprehending how the school environment can influence learners' emotional, cognitive and social experiences. Assessing and promoting these facets within educational settings is vital for learners' overall development and psychological well-being, irrespective of their geographical location. According to this study, psychological well-being was associated to self-acceptance, personal growth, and autonomy, purpose in life, self-efficacy and positive relations with others.

Self-acceptance is linked to having a positive attitude towards oneself and one's life and it may be developed as early as in preschool age (Fan, & Cui, 2024). It represents a person's ability to fully accept and acknowledge themselves, including both their talents and flaws (Bincy, 2023). Cultivating self-acceptance among learners is crucial for their psychological wellbeing. When learners can embrace themselves and their flaws, it results in heightened self-esteem, decreased stress levels and better mental well-being. In Malang City, Bingol and Batik (2019) researched on how self-esteem, social support, and various personality traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness relate to the psychological well-being of public junior high school learners. Their findings indicated that self-esteem, social support, agreeableness, neuroticism and conscientiousness are significantly linked to psychological well-being.

Similarly, Páez-Gallego and Gallardo-López (2020) conducted a study examining the connection between the psychological well-being of adolescent learners and their decision-making styles. The data revealed a strong correlation between adaptive decision-making strategies and improved psychological well-being. Fostering self-acceptance among learners is integral to their psychological well-being. When learners can accept themselves and their imperfections, it leads to increased self-esteem, reduced stress, and excellent overall psychological health. Learners with high

self-acceptance possess a positive attitude toward themselves; acknowledge and accept multiple aspects of themselves including both good and bad qualities; and feel positive about their past life. On the other hand, learners with low self-acceptance feel dissatisfied with themselves; are disappointed with what has occurred in their past life; are troubled about certain personal qualities and wish to be different than what they are.

Personal growth encompasses the drive to learn, adapt and evolve, significantly shaping an individual's psychological well-being. Clerkin (2016) investigated the Transition Year program, designed to foster personal development, maturity, social skills, and readiness for adult life among learners in Ireland. The study revealed that the program positively influenced learners by enhancing their maturity, improving peer and teacher relationships, and honing skills such as time management and teamwork. Similarly, Alaro (2019) examined the impact of authoritative parenting style on the well-being of secondary school learners in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. Their research indicated that authoritative parenting positively influenced learners' personal growth and consequently their psychological well-being.

Personal growth among learners is a fundamental objective within educational contexts. It bolsters their motivation and engagement and nurtures lifelong learning skills. Educational programs emphasize empowering learners to explore their potential, enhancing psychological well-being (Janssen, & van Atteveldt, 2023). Educational innovations encourage cognitive growth by equipping learners with necessary skills, abilities and competencies, enabling teachers to facilitate qualitative leaps in learning rather than strictly focusing on knowledge, information and achievement tests. The goal is to aid learners in personal growth, in both their lives and future careers.

Autonomy within the school environment plays a significant role in shaping the psychological well-being of Junior School learners. It revolves around the individual's sense of independence, control and self-direction in navigating challenges and making decisions (Skinner, and Pitzer, 2012). Research indicates that autonomy-supportive environments positively influence learners' motivation, engagement, and wellbeing. When learners feel a sense of autonomy, they are more intrinsically

motivated to learn, leading to greater academic achievement and satisfaction. Additionally, autonomy fosters a sense of competence and confidence, as learners develop problem-solving skills, resilience and self-efficacy through independent exploration and experimentation. (Wandg & Derakhshan, 2021).

Schools can promote autonomy by providing opportunities for learners to voice and choice in curriculum, assignments, and extracurricular activities. Offering flexibility in learning pathways, assessment methods, and project-based learning experiences allow learners to perfect their educational journey to suit their interests and learning styles (Skinner et al, 2008). Moreover, fostering a supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere encourages learners to take risks, express themselves authentically and learn from both successes and failures. Furthermore, autonomy serves as a coping mechanism by enabling learners to navigate the challenges of adolescence with resilience and adaptability. (Chen, 2020). By fostering a sense of agency and self-reliance, autonomy equips learners with essential coping skills to manage stress, peer pressure and personal conflicts. Encouraging autonomy within the school environment promotes learners' psychological well-being by nurturing their sense of identity, purpose and confidence in facing the complexities of adolescent life and academic demands. By assessing the level of autonomy among Junior School learners, it is possible to evaluate how learning to learn as one of core competences is being implemented and give recommendations.

The notion of purpose in life encompasses an individual's perception of direction, meaning and belief in the significance of their existence, including having specific goals and finding fulfillment in their pursuit. In a study by Yuen et al (2020) in Hong Kong, researchers examined the meaning of life and the impact of school guidance programs on adolescent learners. The findings revealed that learners associated meaning in life with concepts such as "having a career plan" and "setting life goals," suggesting a reciprocal relationship between possessing a sense of meaning, connectedness and acquiring life skills. Furthermore, learners noted how school guidance activities facilitated meaning and development in life. Meanwhile, Ohaka and Kemjika (2020) investigated the correlation between parental-child attachment, emotional competence and the psychological well-being of secondary school learners in Rivers State, Nigeria. Their study unveiled a positive and significant association

between parental attachments, emotional competence and learners' psychological well-being, providing them with a clear sense of purpose in life.

Cultivating a sense of purpose among learners has been linked to heightened academic motivation and resilience. Educational settings that aid learners in identifying their objectives and aspirations play a pivotal role in shaping their psychological well-being (Khatri & Duggal, 2022). The statement by Khatri and Duggal (2022) underscores the importance of educational settings in facilitating learners' identification of objectives and aspirations, which in turn, can profoundly influence their psychological well-being, coping strategies and overall school experience.

In light of this, Ribeiro-Silva et al (2022) avers that encouraging learners to identify their objectives and aspirations within the educational setting can contribute positively to their psychological well-being. When learners have clear goals and aspirations, they are more likely to feel motivated, engaged and hopeful about their future. This sense of purpose can act as a protective factor against stress, anxiety, and depression. A study focusing on coping strategies and psychological well-being, understanding how learners perceive their goals and aspirations within the school environment provides insights into their sense of direction and purpose. Learners who feel supported in identifying and pursuing their objectives are likely to exhibit better coping strategies and resilience in the face of challenges.

High self-efficacy is a general belief about one's abilities, regardless of the specific situation while low self-efficacy means that one does not tend to have much belief in oneself. People with high self-efficacy approach unfamiliar situations with a firm belief that if they exert enough effort, they will be successful (Cayubit, 2022). Failure is viewed as just a temporary set-back that can, and will, be overcome. These people approach problems with a "can-do" attitude. In a study conducted in Ohio, USA by Etherton, Salvano and Kovacs (2022) examining resilience in adolescents, it was found that those who were resilient and competent demonstrated similar levels of self-efficacy and coping mechanisms. Conversely, those classified as maladaptive and low in competence or adversity exhibited lower scores on these measures than the resilient and competent groups.

Webster and Rivers (2019) delved into the discourse on resilience within Higher Education in the UK, exploring its intersection with concepts like 'grit' and the promotion of a Growth Mindset. Their research underscored the importance of resilience and self-efficacy in mastering one's immediate environment among learners. These findings were further supported by Cassidy's (2015) investigation into the relationship between academic self-efficacy (ASE) and academic resilience. Understanding the constructs associated with resilience and how they specifically influence academic resilience can guide the development of interventions to bolster resilience among learners.

Relationships with others embodies the quality of a learners social interactions, encompassing friendships, family relationships and peer connections. It entails feelings of social connectedness and support (Buka, 2013). Positive relations with others also serve as a crucial coping mechanism within the school environment; significantly affecting the psychological well-being of Junior School learners (Bradshaw et al (2014)). This coping strategy revolves around fostering supportive relationships, both with peers and adults to navigate challenges effectively. In the school setting, positive relations manifest through various channels, including friendships, mentorship programs and supportive teacher-learner interactions.

Peer relationships provide emotional support, camaraderie and a sense of belonging, which are vital for adolescents' social and emotional development (Páez-Gallego et al., 2020). Moreover, positive interactions with teachers and other school staff can offer encouragement, guidance and a sense of security, creating a nurturing environment conducive to learning and growth. Ultimately, prioritizing positive relations with others in the school environment enhances the psychological resilience of Junior School learners, equipping them with essential coping skills to navigate the complexities of adolescence and academic life. Integrating the findings from these studies into the research on school environment, coping strategies, and psychological well-being of junior school learners in Tharaka Nithi County can provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to learners' well-being and inform targeted interventions to support their holistic development.

Psychological well-being is essential for learners as it helps them to learn effectively, cope with day-to-day challenges, and develop into resilient young adults.

Psychological well-being is based on a person's perceptions about life activities that occur every day. According to Hachem, et al (2022), psychological well-being is crucial for junior school learners as it profoundly affects their overall development, academic performance and future success. Schools are the best place to shape the mental health of learners since children spend most of their time at school.

It is the conviction of Baby, (2022) that psychological well-being positively correlates with academic achievement. Zhang et al (2023) posits that when learners are mentally healthy, they can focus better, manage stress effectively, and engage more actively in learning activities. This leads to improved academic performance and higher grades. In a similar vein, Fan and Cui (2024) points that psychological well-being during junior school lays the foundation for long-term mental health outcomes. Learners who develop affective psychological well-being at the junior school level are more likely to maintain it throughout adolescence and adulthood. This sets them on a path towards better mental health, academic and career success, and overall life satisfaction in the end (Keyes et al, 2008). Therefore, fostering psychological well-being among junior school learners is essential for promoting learners holistic development, enhancing their academic performance, and setting them up for success in various aspects of life.

The World Health Organisation (2018) reports that over 50% of mental health illnesses manifest for the first time before the age of 14, and estimates from around the world suggest that 10% to 20% of adolescents experience mental health issues.

Coincidentally, most of the transition from primary schools to Junior Schools take place at around 14 years. Moreover, adolescent mental health often shows a continued trajectory into adulthood, with a range of social and health consequences (Clayborne, 2019). As such, adolescent mental wellbeing has become a critical area for public health policy (House of Commons, 2019;). This has highlighted the need for research to uncover potentially modifiable factors associated with mental wellbeing during this

life stage (World Health Organization, 2013). Given the large amount of time that learners spend within school settings, it is important to establish how school environment influences their psychological wellbeing. Psychological well-being significantly contributes to the overall well-being and quality of life of junior school learners. It influences their sense of happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction with life. When learners are psychologically healthy, they tend to experience higher levels of well-being, enjoy school more and have a more positive outlook on life.

School environment is the overall setting where the learners engage in learning. It includes the location, structures, cultural environment, learning facilities, methods, policies, management, learners and staff (Rudolf & Lee, 2023, UNESCO, 2019). Zullig (2010) described school environment as constituting the ambiance where learners engage in academic pursuits, extracurricular activities and social interactions, profoundly influencing their psychological well-being and academic performance. Understanding the nuances of school environment is imperative due to its profound implications on learner's holistic development and educational outcomes.

Perceptions of the social environment significantly influence individuals' psychological well-being across diverse contexts (Väisänen et al., 2017), and learners' experiences within the school environment crucially shape their engagement with the educational process (Bae & Yoon, 2021). A supportive school climate not only fosters active learner participation but also bolsters academic achievement, underscoring the paramount significance of the learning environment. Conversely, an unsupportive or hostile environment can impede learners' psychological health and hinder their academic progress (Baruah, 2022). Thus, studying school environment is relevant for comprehending the intricate interplay between educational settings and learners' psychological well-being, social dynamics, and academic success.

Research on school environment highlights its pivotal role in shaping learners' well-being and academic outcomes. Phuntsho and Dendup (2020) from Bhutan in Asia carried out research on the relationship between school climate, learner engagement and academic achievement in higher secondary school. Their study emphasizes the significance of a nurturing school climate in fostering active learner engagement and

enhancing academic achievement. Their findings were collaborated by López et al., (2021) from the US and Bae and Yoon (2021) from Vietnam. However, while physical infrastructure and teaching methodologies are crucial aspects, more attention needs to be directed towards understanding the social dynamics within educational settings (Väisänen et al., 2017). Positive peer interactions and supportive teacher-learner relationships are essential for promoting a conducive learning environment and facilitating educational success (Maneeza, 2019). Moreover, psychological safety within the educational environment is recognized as a national priority, as it significantly influences learners' holistic development and societal well-being.

A study by Fourie and de Klerk (2024) in South Africa emphasize the importance of a supportive school climate in fostering learners' engagement and enhancing educational achievement. In their paper on Self-esteem and locus of control as predictors of psychological wellbeing of senior secondary school adolescents in Nigeria, Enwere and Mbakwe (2021) mention that there is a growing recognition of the need to address social aspects within educational settings to promote learners' holistic development. Teachers play a critical role in creating a conducive learning environment through positive interactions and effective pedagogical approaches. Additionally, ensuring the psychological safety of learners within the school environment is identified as a key priority for promoting their well-being and academic success.

In the face of community violence, a study conducted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by Starkey et al (2019) investigated if and how two different aspects of a positive school environment might safeguard two important aspects of kids' social-emotional development. They found that, in an environment of high community violence, a supportive school atmosphere guarded against mental health issues and peer victimization. Learners who experienced high community violence and a hostile school climate generally demonstrated the worst development. Research underscores the crucial role of a nurturing school climate in promoting active learner engagement and enhancing educational achievement. Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the need to address social dynamics within educational settings to facilitate learners' holistic development (Ariyo 2021, Mensi, 2021). Teachers are acknowledged as key agents in creating a supportive learning environment through their interactions

and instructional practices (Maneeza, 2019). Therefore, a conducive school environment improves psychological wellbeing among learners lead to high academic achievement.

According to a Nyaga (2020) study conducted in Kenya on boy child experiences and psychological wellbeing in Nairobi City County's Embakasi central constituency, adolescents in this age group faced academic expectations from parents, teachers, and the mselves, which in turn caused stress related to meeting these expectations. The study identified strategies to help adolescents cope with psychological distress which included psychoeducation, cognitive behavioral techniques, psycho-spiritual interventions, and support system mainly from parents On the other hand, Mabunda (2022) conducted research on the promotion of healthy school environments to enhance the well-being of educators in public schools in Kenya. The study established that positive well-being was associated with physical comfort, safety, thermal comfort, availability of water and resources and attractive school surroundings, while a negative well-being pertained to unclean surroundings, physical facilities that were poorly maintained and shortage of toilets.

Although the learning environment in schools can be dysfunctional and harmful, with proper management, it can also serve as a stimulant for creativity and productivity (Benedict, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative that those involved in education, such as administrators, understand the possible benefits and drawbacks of a school setting. This iterative process of evaluation and improvement is essential for ensuring that schools effectively support learners' psychological well-being over time. In essence, recognizing both the constructive and destructive potential of the school environment underscores the need for proactive efforts by school administrators to create a supportive and nurturing environment that promotes learners psychological wellbeing.

2.2 School Physical Environment and Psychological Wellbeing.

This section explored the multifaceted aspects of physical environment and its influence on the psychological wellbeing of junior school learners.

2.2.1: School Infrastructure

Research conducted in different parts of the world supports the assertion that learners benefit significantly from schools equipped with modern, well-furnished and aesthetically pleasing facilities. For instance, Smith and Anderson (2018) in the United States revealed positive associations between well-maintained facilities and reduced learner stress. They emphasized that clean, well-lit, and ventilated classrooms create an environment conducive to learning and mental health. The influence of school facilities extends to their functionality. Adequate classroom space, well-stocked libraries, fully equipped laboratories, and accessible recreational areas improve learners' psychological well-being (Ene-Obong, 2012). These researchers highlighted that inadequate maintenance of these facilities can lead to feelings of frustration and hinder academic progress, ultimately affecting learners' emotional and mental states negatively.

In Asia, a study conducted in Japan by Ngo et al (2019) found that schools with modern, well-maintained infrastructures significantly contributed to the overall psychological well-being of learners. The researchers further pointed out that students in these environments exhibited lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of academic performance compared to their peers in less favorable conditions. Similarly, Green and Jones (2019) in Australia found out that school infrastructure, particularly the availability of outdoor recreational spaces, played a crucial role in promoting students' psychological well-being. Their study indicated that access to well-maintained playgrounds and sports facilities helped reduce stress and improve overall mental health among learners. They advocated for policies that prioritize the development and maintenance of school infrastructures to support student well-being.

The availability of a conducive environment that allows for effective learning and engagement is paramount in reducing stress and anxiety among learners. Modern classroom technology can enhance the learning experience and influence learners' psychological well-being. Kay et al (2011) collaborate by demonstrating that technology can engage learners and foster a sense of competence and confidence when effectively incorporated. A study by Adeyemo (2020) conducted in Nigeria found a direct correlation between the physical attributes of school facilities and learners' psychological well-being. Learners in schools with well-furnished and

visually pleasing facilities reported reduced stress levels, increased overall psychological well-being, and improved academic performance.

In North Africa, El-Sayed and Hassan (2020) conducted research in Egypt, highlighting the significance of school infrastructure in shaping students' psychological well-being. Their study found that schools with adequate facilities provided a supportive environment that enhanced students' mental health and academic success. They called for policy reforms to ensure all schools meet basic infrastructure standards.

In Zambia, Mubita (2021) looked at the role of schools in providing a safe and secure environment. He discovered that it helps to reduce the impact of stress, anxiety, and trauma on learners' mental health. Learners receiving help and support can positively influence their academic and social performance. When schools prioritize the safety and security of their learners, they create a conducive environment for learning, growth, and emotional development. Hence, schools need to implement adequate physical and psychological safety and security measures that support coping interventions and promote learners' overall well-being within the school environment.

In East Africa, a study conducted by Gachuri et al (2022) in Kenya emphasized the importance of school infrastructure in shaping learners' psychological well-being. Their research showed that students in schools with modern facilities experienced lower levels of stress and higher academic performance compared to those in schools with inadequate infrastructure. They recommended increased funding for school improvements to enhance student outcomes.

According to a study done in Nakuru County by Muriuki (2022), the government rushed CBC into schools without first addressing problems including understaffing, a shortage of teaching and learning resources, and inadequate infrastructure in the form of classrooms and laboratories. He further said that the administration had not established effective channels for consultation and communication beforehand, and that the environment for teaching and learning was uncomfortable. These have had a particularly negative impact on the pioneer junior school learners. These issues have a

direct impact on the school environment, which in turn affects learners' psychological wellbeing.

2.2.2 Learning Resources

Learning resources constitute a critical component of the physical environment since they encompass various materials, tools and technologies that support the educational process, ranging from textbooks and reference materials to multimedia resources, laboratory equipment and digital learning platforms. These resources are vital in shaping learners' learning experiences, academic engagement and overall psychological well-being. Various researchers have asserted that learning resources significantly influence the psychological well-being of learners.

In the United States, Pang et al (2019) found that access to digital learning platforms and multimedia resources significantly improved students' engagement and overall psychological well-being. Their research indicated that students with access to diverse learning resources exhibited higher levels of academic motivation and lower levels of stress. They argued that technology integration in schools should be a priority to enhance educational outcomes.

In Europe, Rodriguez et al (2022) in Spain explored the impact of learning resources on learners' psychological well-being. The findings revealed that schools with well-equipped libraries and access to various educational materials promoted a positive learning environment, leading to reduced anxiety and improved mental health among learners. They advocated for equitable distribution of learning resources to ensure all learners benefit equally.

In Asia, research by Chen and Li (2021) in China highlighted the importance of learning resources in shaping students' well-being. Their study demonstrated that access to modern educational tools and resources significantly contributed to students' academic success and psychological well-being. They recommended policies to ensure that schools, especially in rural areas, are well-equipped with necessary learning materials.

In Australia, Willis et al (2019) examined the role of learning resources in promoting students' psychological well-being. Their research found that schools with access to a wide range of educational materials, including digital platforms and laboratory equipment, provided a supportive learning environment that enhanced students' mental health and academic performance. They called for increased funding for educational resources to support student well-being.

In South Africa, Nkosi and Dlamini (2021) investigated the impact of learning resources on students' psychological well-being. The findings revealed that access to high-quality educational materials and technologies significantly improved students' engagement and overall mental health. They stressed the need for government and private sector collaboration to improve resource availability in schools.

In West Africa, Adubea (2023) in Ghana explored the relationship between learning resources and students' psychological well-being. The research indicated that schools with adequate resources, such as textbooks and laboratory equipment, promoted a positive learning environment that reduced stress and anxiety among students. They highlighted the importance of teacher training in effectively utilizing available resources to enhance learning outcomes.

In North Africa, khoumssi and Achahbar (2023) in Morocco highlighted the significance of learning resources in shaping students' psychological well-being. Their study found that access to diverse educational materials and digital learning platforms contributed to students' academic success and overall mental health. They recommended policy changes to ensure resource allocation is prioritized in educational planning.

In Central Africa, Bakrania et al (2018) in Burundi examined the role of learning resources in promoting students' well-being. The findings revealed that schools with access to high-quality educational materials and technologies provided a supportive learning environment that enhanced students' psychological well-being. They advocated for community involvement in supporting school resource acquisition.

In East Africa, Kamau and Njoroge (2022) explored the impact of learning resources on students' psychological well-being in Uganda. Their study indicated that access to

diverse educational materials and digital platforms significantly improved students' engagement and overall mental health. They called for international aid to support resource improvements in schools.

In Kenya, Kinuthia (2023) sought to understand the role of technology in Junior Schools and its influence on psychological well-being. Access to diverse and high-quality resources fosters engagement, competence, and autonomy, contributing to learners' well-being and academic success. Similarly, Ochieng (2023) looked at the impact of school facilities on learners' psychological well-being, considering the local challenges and opportunities. He established that the country's unique circumstances, including geographical and economic factors, should be considered. This ensures that equitable access to learning resources is essential for promoting learners' psychological well-being and academic achievement.

Junior secondary education has the potential to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Learners at this level are at a crucial stage in their cognitive development, and teaching methods that emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving skills can significantly impact their intellectual growth. Project-based learning and group work are effective strategies for developing these skills and can benefit learners inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, integrating technology into education can improve the quality of junior secondary education in Kenya. Technology can enhance student learning by providing interactive and engaging resources and facilitating communication between teachers and learners. Successful examples of technology integration in Kenyan junior secondary schools may be achieved through use of tablets and e-learning platforms.

2.3 School Social Environment and Psychological Wellbeing

The school social environment plays a vital role in shaping the social and emotional development of learners. This section examines peer relationships and teacher-learner interactions, crucial components of the school social environment, and their influence on learners' psychological wellbeing.

2.3.1 Peer Relationships

Peer relationships are a fundamental aspect of the school social environment and critical to social and emotional development. They encompass the interactions and connections that individuals of similar age or status establish with their peers. Adolescents and learners universally rely on these relationships for various purposes, such as social support, friendship, social skill development and cultivating a sense of belonging and identity. The quality of these relationships significantly influences the psychological well-being of learners. Positive peer interactions are marked by friendships, social acceptance and a strong sense of belonging within the school community.

Positive peer relationships are associated with higher psychological well-being levels among learners. For instance, a study conducted in America by Roach (2018) emphasizes the positive correlation between strong peer relationships and learners' emotional and psychological health. Roach's findings indicate that when learners experience a sense of belonging and acceptance among their peers, they tend to have better mental health outcomes. Conversely, the negative aspects of peer relationships, such as peer exclusion and bullying, have been demonstrated to harm learners' psychological health. Roach points out that the school environment should actively foster positive peer interactions through structured social activities and peer support programs to enhance learners' well-being.

In the United States, where one in five adolescents has been diagnosed with a mental health disorder, positive peer pressure has been found to have a more significant impact on the mental health of adolescents than parental support (Roach, 2018). This shows that peer influence can affect the psychological wellbeing of learners positively or negatively. Peer relationships therefore play a crucial role in shaping learners' social experiences. Positive relationships can promote happiness and well-being, while negative or adversarial relationships can lead to stress and emotional distress. Roach emphasizes the importance of schools implementing peer mentoring and peer leadership programs to harness the positive aspects of peer influence.

In Latin America, Aguilar-Farias et al. (2020) revealed that peer exclusion and bullying in schools can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and depression among

learners. This evidence highlights the global implications of negative peer interactions on learners' psychological well-being. The researchers argue for the implementation of comprehensive anti-bullying policies and programs to mitigate these negative effects. Another study in Ghana by Nyarko et al. (2020) on the impact of stressful life events on learners' mental health indicated that such events were associated with higher levels of depressive and psychological distress symptoms. This underscores the critical role of supportive peer relationships in mitigating the adverse effects of stress. Nyarko and colleagues suggest that schools need to create environments that support resilience and provide mechanisms for learners to seek help when faced with stressors.

In Asia, Liang et al. (2020) explored the dynamics of peer relationships among adolescents and found that positive peer interactions were linked to reduced levels of anxiety and depression. The study highlighted the importance of fostering an inclusive school environment where all learners feel accepted and valued. Liang and colleagues emphasized the role of school counselors and teachers in mediating peer conflicts and promoting a culture of empathy and respect among learners.

In Australia, a study by Graham and Fitzgerald (2020) underscored the importance of peer relationships in promoting psychological well-being among learners. Their research indicated that learners who experienced positive peer interactions were more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors and report higher levels of life satisfaction. Graham and Fitzgerald advocated for the integration of peer support programs within the school curriculum to foster a collaborative and supportive school culture.

In South Africa, Braud and Dwarika (2020) investigated the role of peer relationships in the psychological well-being of learners in disadvantaged communities. Their findings revealed that strong peer bonds provided emotional support and a sense of security, which were crucial for learners facing external stressors such as poverty and violence. Braud and Dwarika recommended that schools in similar contexts prioritize the development of peer support networks to enhance learners' resilience and well-being.

In West Africa, a study by Afolabi and Animashaun (2023) in Nigeria examined the impact of peer relationships on learners' mental health and academic performance. The research found that positive peer interactions were associated with reduced levels of stress and anxiety, as well as improved academic outcomes. Afolabi and colleagues emphasized the need for schools to create environments that encourage positive peer interactions and provide resources for learners to develop healthy relationships.

In Central Africa, Mutagoma (2021) conducted research in Rwanda to understand the role of peer relationships in learners' psychological well-being. Their findings indicated that strong peer support systems were essential for learners' emotional resilience and overall mental health. Mutagoma called for schools to develop peer mentoring programs and create safe spaces where learners can discuss their challenges and seek support.

In East Africa, Waweru and Kamau (2022) explored the dynamics of peer relationships in Kenyan schools and their impact on learners' psychological well-being. Their research highlighted that positive peer interactions were linked to improved academic performance and reduced levels of anxiety and stress. Waweru and Kamau suggested that schools invest in programs that promote peer support and provide training for teachers to facilitate healthy peer relationships.

Peer relationships may also take the form of peer counselling amongst learners, where they assist each other in adjusting and addressing challenges they may be experiencing in the various stages of their social development. A study by Maiwa and Kiaritha (2021) concluded that peer counselling has a positive influence on learners' social adjustment and recommended that schools should use peer counselling to enhance learners' social wellbeing. Their research highlighted that peer counselling provides a platform for learners to share their experiences and find solutions collaboratively, fostering a supportive school environment.

A study by Okata (2022) showed that peer pressure and the instructional environment had a significant impact on academic achievement and wellbeing of learners. Okata's findings suggest that peer influence within a structured and supportive educational context can enhance academic outcomes and promote overall wellbeing. Therefore, it

is necessary to investigate these relationships within a specific sociocultural context. Learners who feel connected to their school and classmates are more likely to be engaged in learning and thrive academically. Okata calls for more research into how different forms of peer influence affect learners across diverse cultural settings to develop more targeted interventions. Further research by Muriuki (2022) pointed out that positive peer interactions significantly contributed to reduced stress levels and improved academic performance among learners. Muriuki called for schools to implement peer support programs and provide resources to foster a positive school culture that supports learners' social and emotional development.

2.3.2 Teacher -Learner Interactions

The interactions between teachers and learners are a vital and universally significant aspect of the school social environment. Across the world, these interactions encompass a spectrum of experiences, ranging from classroom engagement to mentorship and guidance. Research from various cultural and educational contexts highlights the substantial influence of positive teacher-learner relationships on learners' psychological well-being.

When learners feel connected to their teachers, experience respect, and perceive genuine care and support from their educators, it significantly contributes to their psychological well-being. A study conducted in Iceland by Egilson and Traustadottir (2020) emphasized that positive teacher-learner relationships are associated with improved academic performance, higher self-esteem and enhanced overall psychological health. Egilson and Traustadottir argue that these relationships foster a sense of security and trust, which are essential for learners' emotional development. They advocate for teacher training programs that emphasize the importance of building strong, supportive relationships with learners.

This pattern is not unique to one geographical area, underlining the global significance of these relationships. Coronado et al. (2021) in California found that the teacher-learner relationship played a key role in supporting social-emotional learning, encouraging prosocial behaviors and creating more engaged and motivated learning opportunities for the learners. Their study suggests that teachers who actively engage

with their learners and provide consistent support contribute to a positive school climate, enhancing learners' overall wellbeing. Coronado and colleagues recommend schools to implement professional development programs that help teachers to develop skills in social-emotional learning and learner engagement.

Unsupportive teacher-learner relationships may result in stress and hinder the development of positive psychological attributes among learners. Research conducted in Spain by Carnicer et al (2019) revealed that learners who experience strained or unsupportive interactions with their teachers might face increased anxiety levels and have difficulty developing essential psychological attributes such as resilience. These findings align with international research highlighting the adverse consequences of challenges in teacher-learner relationships. Carnicer et al. (2019) recommend that teachers receive training in emotional intelligence and conflict resolution to foster more supportive interactions. They also highlight the need for regular assessments of teacher-learner relationships to identify and address issues early.

In Asia, a study by Heo et al (2021) in South Korea explored the influence of teacher-learner interactions on learners' psychological well-being. Their findings indicated that supportive teacher behaviors were linked to reduced levels of student anxiety and increased academic motivation. Heo and colleagues recommended that schools implement training programs to help teachers develop skills in providing emotional support and creating inclusive classroom environments.

In Australia, a study by Larsen and James (2022) highlighted the role of teacher-learner relationships in promoting learners' mental health and academic success. Their findings indicated that learners who felt supported by their teachers were more likely to report higher levels of well-being and academic achievement. Larsen and James advocated for schools to prioritize the development of teacher-learner relationships through mentoring and professional development programs.

In South Africa, a study by Nkosi and Dlamini (2021) examined the influence of teacher-learner interactions on learners' psychological well-being in disadvantaged communities. Their research found that positive teacher-learner relationships were critical for learners' emotional resilience and academic success. Nkosi and Dlamini

recommended that schools in similar contexts prioritize the development of supportive teacher-learner relationships to enhance learners' well-being and academic outcomes.

In Rwanda, Bizimana (2023) examined the role of teacher-learner relationships in promoting learners' psychological well-being. Their findings indicated that supportive teacher behaviors were associated with reduced levels of student anxiety and increased academic motivation. Bizimana called for schools to prioritize the development of teacher-learner relationships through mentoring and professional development programs.

According to Muchira, Morris, and Wawire (2023), a competency-based curriculum (CBC) prioritizes mentoring, facilitating, supervising, and coaching in order to foster the growth of a new connection between teachers and learners. Teachers are encouraged to empathize with learners, facilitate autonomous learning, and provide both constructive and qualitative forms of feedback (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2013). Research shows that learners who trust their teachers are more motivated and perform better in school (Alam, 2022). Therefore, the teaching role is geared toward helping learners gain personalized learning experiences designed to meet their individual needs, abilities, paces, and capabilities. Muchira and colleagues suggest that the success of CBC largely depends on the ability of the teachers to adapt to these new roles and ongoing professional development is crucial.

Wanjiru (2021) explored the impact of teacher-learner relationships on learners' psychological well-being in Kenya. His research highlighted that supportive teacher behaviors were linked to improved academic performance and reduced levels of anxiety and stress. Waweru and Kamau suggested that schools invest in programs that promote supportive teacher-learner relationships and provide training for teachers to develop skills in building positive relationships with their learners.

In general, learners who feel connected to their school environments not only have more positive academic outcomes, but are also less likely to engage in risky behaviors (and have better social–emotional outcomes and psychological health (Korpeshocket al 2020). As is evidenced by these research findings, school connectedness is an

important construct to consider when examining a variety of learner outcomes, particularly those related to academics and school success.

Graham et al (2022) also discovered factors that were related to school connectedness. At the school level, connectedness was found to be greater in schools that provided a variety of extracurricular activities, had good classroom management, and lenient discipline climate. School size was only mildly associated with connectedness, while class size and teacher qualifications and experience did not seem to exert significant influences. On the individual level, younger and higher-grade-point learners were found to be more connected with their schools.

While the influence of teacher-learner interactions on learners' psychological well-being is well documented in various parts of the world, it is essential to explore the nuances of these interactions within the Junior School context in Tharaka Nithi County. Local cultural norms, educational practices, and the specific characteristics of the Junior School system may shape these relationships in distinct ways. Therefore, investigating the nature and impact of teacher-learner interactions in this unique context is essential for a comprehensive understanding of how these interactions affect the psychological well-being of learners.

2.4 Emotional Environment and Psychological Wellbeing

The emotional atmosphere of a school plays a vital role in promoting the emotional well-being and stability of learners, considering their individual requirements. According to Choi (2018), it functions as a safe foundation for youngsters to grow into mentally resilient individuals. An optimal environment involves adults providing emotional support, comprehension and empathy, while creating a secure setting for children to investigate and articulate a variety of emotions, both positive and negative (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019). The social and emotional growth of learners has a substantial impact on their future achievement in social, academic and professional domains (Parhiala, 2018).

An atmosphere that promotes positive emotions allows learners to excel in different areas of development, encouraging a favorable mindset towards learning and

promoting collaborative behavior, self-reliance and adaptability (Salmela-Aro et al., 2016). By understanding the emotional states of individuals and groups within the learning environment, educators who understand the impact of emotions on the learning process can create more successful learning experiences. This study focused on school connectedness and self-awareness as indicators of school emotional well-being among Junior School learners.

2.4.1 School Connectedness

School connectedness, which is the extent to which learners perceive acceptance, value, and support within the school setting, has become a significant predictor of adolescents' present and future mental health (Rowe et al,2007). This assertion highlights how learners' impressions of support from both peers and adults, as well as their recognition and care for their individual well-being, play a crucial role in safeguarding their health and overall welfare. Multiple studies have shown that feeling connected to school during adolescence is strongly associated with long-lasting positive effects on adult health (Chelsea et al, 2024).These effects include reduced emotional distress, decreased likelihood of having suicidal thoughts, lower rates of experiencing physical violence, decreased engagement in risky sexual behaviors, lower rates of sexually transmitted infection diagnoses, less misuse of prescription drugs, and reduced use of illegal substances (Steiner & Holzinger, 2019).

In order to make sure that the children's developmental requirements are met in both indoor and outdoor learning environments, practitioners invest a great deal of time in preparation. Huo (2022) claims, however, that the emotional context is frequently disregarded. School can be stressful at any age, which is why learners need a positive emotional environment that supports their educational path. Swain (2013) asserts that emotions and learning are inseparable. Emotions can enhance or interfere with learning depending on which ones are driving the experience. School is one very important place that both educates and socializes adolescents. How they perceive their school is influential to their development. School connectedness refers to how students feel generally about their school and how they connect positively with peers, teachers, and other adults in the school community.

Furthermore, research indicates that the quality of the school environment, including the emotional support provided by teachers and peers, significantly impacts learners' psychological well-being (Liu et al., 2023). The sense of belonging and connectedness within the school setting fosters resilience and enhances emotional stability, which are crucial for overall mental health. For instance, the Sander et al (2019) emphasizes that emotionally supportive school environments are fundamental in nurturing learners' psychological well-being, ultimately influencing their academic performance and social behavior.

Recent studies have emphasized the necessity of creating emotionally supportive environments to promote school connectedness. Zechner et al (2023) conducted a study in Austria that examined interventions aimed at enhancing peer connectedness through social-emotional learning among Junior School learners. The study revealed statistically significant improvements in social skills, peer connectivity and happiness, although a slight decrease in classroom climate was noted. These findings suggest that while social-emotional abilities positively impact connectedness and happiness, the implementation of such programs requires careful consideration to maintain a positive classroom environment.

Moreover, Mokwena (2023) in South Africa found that emotionally supportive school environments are crucial in mitigating the negative effects of socio-economic disparities on learners' mental health. Their research indicated that learners who feel connected to their schools exhibit higher levels of psychological well-being and lower levels of anxiety and depression. This aligns with findings from India, where family and institutional support significantly contribute to learners' psychological well-being and academic engagement (Chaudhry, 2024).

Zechner et al (2023) conducted a study in Austria that examined treatments aimed at enhancing Peer Connectedness through Social-Emotional Learning in junior secondary school learners. Statistically significant effects were observed for social skills, peer connectivity, and happiness, although there was a decrease in classroom climate. The hypothesized correlations were partially validated, as social-emotional abilities were found to have an impact on connectedness, which in turn influenced happiness. Further evaluations uncovered variations in implementation among

schools, indicating the necessity for additional support to ensure optimal efficiency of these program. The researchers assessed the effects of a program implemented in schools on social-emotional abilities, peer relationships, well-being and the overall atmosphere in the classroom.

Shochet et al (2020) also examined the relationship between school connectedness and mental health symptoms. Unlike Loukas et al. (2006), they found a strong predictive relationship between weak school connectedness and mental health symptoms 1 year later in 12- to 14-year-old learners in the areas of depression, anxiety and general functioning. However, mental health symptoms were not predictive of school connectedness. In their longitudinal study of elementary, middle, and high school learners, Catalano et al(2014) found that learners who report higher levels of bonding to school (i.e., attachment to school and commitment to school tasks) not only have better grades and achievement test scores but are also less likely to repeat a grade or dropout of high school.

Similarly, learners who perceive supportive teacher relationships tend to have fewer behavioral problems that interrupt academic work at school (e.g., school absenteeism, suspension, or expulsion (Sander et al). Research focusing specifically on sixth-grade learners has shown that positive student–teacher relationships are related to more responsible classroom behavior, while learner–teacher conflict is correlated with higher rates of misbehavior and disrespectful acts in the classroom (Davis, 2006).

School connectedness also reflects the quality of learners’ engagement with peers, teachers, and learning in the school environment. It has attracted attention from both the health and education sectors as a potentially modifiable protective factor for common mental health problems (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009) School is an important setting for adolescents to develop connectedness to peers, teachers and school and this connection has the potential to play a protective role in promoting and enhancing their psychological well-being. The risk of developing depression increases in early adolescence.

In Kenya, particularly in Tharaka Nithi County, traditional coping strategies and community support are integral to learners' psychological health. Murithi (2022)

demonstrated that school connectedness significantly influences learners' emotional well-being and academic performance. This study highlighted the importance of fostering a sense of belonging and support within the school environment to enhance learners' overall well-being. The concept of school connectedness is further supported by research showing that positive school environments can reduce instances of bullying, improve learner-teacher relationships, and create a culture of respect and inclusion (Lelo, 2024). This is critical, as negative school environments can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues among learners.

2.4.2 Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the competency of how feelings, ideas, and moral principles affect an individual's performance in various settings, including the family or the classroom. The development of learners' personality hinges on a synergistic collaboration among teachers, parents, the community and the learners' own self-awareness (Winter 2024). Suwartini (2017) explains that fostering quality character necessitates both self-management skills and effective cooperation between school stakeholders and the broader community. According to Arifin (2019), it is the capacity to identify their responsibilities and boundaries. As individual self-awareness increases, they shift into positive social & emotional behavioral changes.

However, adolescents encounter complex challenges in achieving this character development. Julianto (2016) identifies that during the learning process, adolescents often grapple with excessive self-consciousness, leading to anxiety and diminished responsiveness and creativity in school. Similarly, Diananda's research (2018) highlights prevalent issues of crime among teenagers, including fights, theft, and sexual abuse, which significantly hinder self-awareness development. The persistent occurrence of such problems can ultimately stifle learners' ability to thrive and grow within their educational environments.

The personality character of learners will be realized if there is a synergistic collaboration between the roles of teachers, parents, the community and the self-awareness of the learners themselves. In line with Suwartini's (2017) statement which states that quality character requires self-management skills and good cooperation

between school residents and the community around the school. In fact, to achieve this character, adolescents have complex problems. Julianto (2016) found that the problem faced by adolescents in the learning process at school was that they were too nervous and busy paying attention to the views of others about themselves, thus making students anxious and resulting in decreased ability to respond and creativity in the learning process at school. This is similar to Diananda's research (2018) which states that the main problem of self-awareness among teenagers is the existence of crime, such as brawls between students, cases of theft, and cases of sexual abuse among teenagers which are quite disturbing

According to Maharani (2016), the lack of self-focus among teenagers impedes their ability to acknowledge their identity as learners. Junior school learners, generally between the ages of 12 and 15, are in the initial phases of teenage development, which is a critical period for developing self-awareness. Lailatussaidah (2021) highlights the importance for teenagers to acknowledge their position within their family, peer group, and social network. They should also evaluate their academic abilities and career goals, while being aware of their own strengths and shortcomings. Similarly, according to Hurlock (2012), individuals who are fourteen years old generally exhibit increased irritation and emotional instability, highlighting the significance of emotional intelligence in directing positive objectives. Sufah and Sukiman (2024) argues that emotional intelligence is essential for achieving excellent learning outcomes, including self-awareness. Self-awareness is a crucial milestone for teenagers to have a deeper understanding of themselves and successfully manage their educational career.

In England, the importance of school environments in addressing the emotional well-being of all learners is emphasized in key policy documents and initiatives. The approaches prioritize enhancing emotional health rather than merely preventing disorders, focusing on holistic school issues such as school climate, support services provision, teacher professional development, alongside curriculum-based efforts. Self-awareness plays a crucial role in this context, as individuals with self-awareness are cognizant of their perceptions, feelings and aspirations as well as their surroundings. Matlin and Julianto (2016) emphasizes that self-awareness enables learners to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and understand that their behavior is

influenced by their thoughts. Maharani's research (2016) highlights the importance of self-awareness in fostering discipline in schools, a notion supported by Sudarmono (2017), who argues that self-awareness is essential for effective learning. Similarly, Susilowati (2015) suggests that self-awareness not only contributes to personal and social development but also to psychological well-being. Collectively, these studies underscore the necessity of self-awareness among learners, as its absence may lead to actions or behaviors that deviate from the intended goals and expectations of learning activities.

Rosand and Johansen (2024) did a study in Norway, where they investigated the relationship between the school environment and emotional difficulties in both male and female learners. The results indicated that girls reported a higher prevalence of emotional difficulties in comparison to boys. Emotional difficulties were seen to differ among classes because of factors such as the composition of the class (such as the ratio of boys to girls) and the overall setting of the class. Relevant contextual aspects that influence emotional disorders include the support from peers and teachers, as well as the possibility for emotional issues to propagate within a class. Significantly, the correlations between emotional difficulties and assistance from peers, educators, and parents were more evident in girls than boys. The study highlights the significance of the classroom setting and promotes the development of strong connections between teenagers and teachers. It also emphasizes the need to treat emotional issues among adolescents to enhance their emotional well-being.

In order to investigate the effects of family and school environments on the prediction of emotional intelligence and student well-being, as well as the potential mediating role of emotional intelligence, Muhibbin et al (2023) carried out a study in the Pematang District, Indonesia. The results indicated that the family environment had a substantial influence on the well-being of learners, while emotional intelligence did not play a crucial role as a mediator. Furthermore, the school setting has been identified as a crucial factor in determining the well-being of learners, with emotional intelligence playing a significant part in mediating this connection. These findings highlight the significance of acknowledging and tackling both familial and educational settings in fostering learner well-being.

Oluwole and Oluwole (2019) conducted a study to examine the effects of well-being treatment and resilience skills training on the level of school connectedness among junior secondary school learners in Delta State, Nigeria. Their findings demonstrated that these treatments had a substantial impact on enhancing school connectivity and fostering the personal development of learners. Therefore, promoting personal growth is essential in educational environments as it enhances motivation, involvement, and the cultivation of abilities for lifetime learning. Education programs should focus on allowing learners to discover and develop their abilities while also improving their mental health (Barry et al, 2017).

Whilst schools can easily recognize the tangible requirements of children, such as teachers, books, pencils, desks, classrooms, playgrounds, nutritious food, sanitation, and uniforms, their emotional and mental needs are sometimes less conspicuous. Wango (2021) conducted a study in Kenya and discovered that it is crucial to treat emotional needs to promote the psychological well-being of children. This finding is consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which encompasses both physiological and psychological necessities.

Optimal emotional well-being is essential for facilitating healthy growth and promoting optimal learning outcomes in an educational setting. Early detection and assistance for children's emotional and mental well-being, along with customized interventions, are growing in significance (Wango & Mungai, 2007). In addition, addressing mental health concerns in educational institutions aids in diminishing the negative associations and encourages open dialogues on emotions and overall wellness. This fosters a climate of compassion, comprehension, and assistance, wherein learners feel at ease in requesting assistance when necessary.

Indicators of self-awareness are knowing what one feels, being able to make their own decisions, being realistic and confident (Lailatussaidah, et al. 2021). Individuals who have low self-awareness will tend to lack respect for themselves, are unable to control all behavior and will experience obstacles in establishing relationships with other people and their environment (Hilmawan & Clark, 2019). Meanwhile, someone who has high self-awareness can build good relationships with their social environment,

according to Lailatussaidah (2021) that self-awareness functions to control all emotions so that they can be used in establishing social relationships with others.

Learners who have low self-awareness will tend to lack respect for themselves, are unable to control all behavior and will experience obstacles in establishing relationships with other people and their environment (Parek in Hilmawan. 2018) Meanwhile, someone who has high self-awareness can build good relationships with their social environment. The literature highlights the pivotal role of the school's emotional environment in fostering learners' psychological well-being. The literature indicates the importance of nurturing environments for learners' emotional growth, fostering their connectedness with their peers and their support system as well as improving their self-awareness. The literature also looks at the overlooked significance of emotional conditions in education, and underscore school connectedness as a crucial predictor. There is minimal literature available on the concept of emotional environment and the role it plays in the psychological wellbeing amongst African countries and especially in Kenya.

If learners are more aware of their emotions, they'll be better able to accept and respond to them. They won't be ashamed of what they feel, and won't have to hide it. As a result, they'll be more coherent and intelligent when it comes to solving their problems. They won't be torn between moral principles that overlook what human nature is, and parts of themselves that aren't capable of respecting those moral principles.

In conclusion, the emotional environment of a school significantly influences the psychological well-being of learners. This review underscores the importance of creating emotionally supportive school environments globally, regionally, and locally. By fostering emotional engagement, providing comprehensive support systems, and understanding the unique needs of learners, educators can significantly enhance the psychological well-being and academic success of learners.

2.5 Coping Strategies and Psychological Well-being

Coping strategies encompass a range of cognitive, psychological and behavioral approaches that individuals employ to effectively manage or mitigate the impact of

stressful events and external stressors. Research from various parts of the world has consistently highlighted the critical role of coping strategies in influencing psychological well-being, especially among learners. This study focused on problem-focused coping strategy, social support services and avoidance as indicators of coping strategies.

2.5.1 Problem Focused Coping Strategy

According to Parker (2019), empirical evidence suggests that certain coping strategies have the potential to mitigate stress and foster favorable psychological outcomes, while others have the propensity to intensify stress and engender adverse psychological consequences. The significance of coping strategies in tackling mental health challenges has been emphasized by Steiner-Hofbauer and Holzinger (2020), who asserted that accessible counseling for learners in need of psychological care should be made available. They also noted that different coping interventions of positive psychology showed a positive impact on learners' psychological well-being, which can significantly affect their academic achievement and overall well-being.

According to Folkman (2013), coping is the continuous adjustment of one's thoughts and behaviour in response to certain pressures, both internal and external, which are thought to be greater than one's capacity. In order to assist learners in managing their mental health concerns, it is essential to comprehend their chosen coping mechanisms and offer easily available and efficient mental health support services.

A cross-cultural study examining coping strategies utilized by college learners in 14 different countries identified several prevalent mechanisms employed to manage psychological health difficulties. Sattar et al. (2022) reported coping strategies such as support seeking, active coping, acceptance, avoidance/denial, substance abuse, faith/religion, and sports. Though the study was carried out among older adolescents in colleges, it highlighted that learners adopt both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies when faced with stressors.

Despite extensive research, there remains a need for comprehensive investigation into practical coping mechanisms employed by learners. Giamus et al. (2017) noted that

identifying effective coping strategies can assist learners in addressing psychological wellbeing concerns and avoiding detrimental strategies that may exacerbate their issues. In educational settings, learners employ a range of mechanisms to address psychological health concerns, including seeking religious support, engaging in planning activities, positive reinterpretation techniques, breathing exercises, consulting with school counselors, open conversations with trusted individuals, and utilizing social networking platforms.

Studies in America emphasize the importance of problem-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping involves actively addressing the problem causing stress. This approach has been linked to improved psychological outcomes among learners. For example, Carver and Sheier (2019) highlights that problem-focused coping strategies, such as planning and taking direct action, are generally more effective in reducing stress and improving well-being compared to avoidance strategies. In Europe, coping strategies among learners have been extensively studied. Research by Rodríguez et al (2023) emphasized the significance of adaptive coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that learners who employed problem-focused coping strategies, such as seeking solutions to their problems and utilizing available resources, experienced better psychological outcomes compared to those who relied on avoidance or denial.

In Asia, the effectiveness of problem-focused coping strategies has been highlighted in various studies. Cheng et al. (2014) conducted a meta-analytic review that demonstrated the benefits of coping flexibility—adjusting coping strategies to suit different stressful situations. They found that learners who could adapt their coping strategies to address specific problems reported better psychological adjustment and well-being. Another study by Wang (2021) in China, examined the psychological well-being of high school learners and how they used coping mechanisms. It discovered that learners used a variety of coping strategies including seeking assistance, evading problems, engaging in fantasy, rationalizing, withdrawing, self-blaming, and exercising endurance. Male participants tended to lean towards imaginative or fantasybased activities, where as female participants preferred endurance-based activities Senior high school learners tended to adopt positive and mature coping styles such as problem-solving

and seeking assistance, in contrast to middle school learners who preferred negative and immature coping styles such as withdrawal and self-blame. This aligns with Lan and Zang (2013), whose study indicated that middle school learners commonly employ problem-solving, seeking consultation, escapism, rationalization and self-accusation to address their psychological challenges.

In Australia, national mental health initiatives have played a crucial role in promoting problem-focused coping strategies. Research by Kjeldstadli et al. (2006) found that public health campaigns have significantly influenced individuals' coping mechanisms, promoting more adaptive strategies and enhancing psychological health. These campaigns have encouraged learners to engage in problem-solving and seek professional help when dealing with stressors.

Research in South Africa indicates that social support is a crucial component of problem-focused coping. Studies have shown that learners who actively seek support from family, friends and community members are better equipped to handle stress and maintain their psychological well-being (Murray-Harvey et al., 2002). In North Africa, the role of cultural and religious coping strategies is particularly prominent. Studies have shown that turning to religious practices can provide significant psychological relief and improve overall well-being (Moriani & Herruzo, 2004). This is particularly relevant in regions where religious beliefs and practices are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric.

In West Africa, Ayambire (2020) focused on the interplay between coping strategies and socio-economic factors. Their findings suggest that economic stability is a significant moderator in the effectiveness of coping strategies, with more affluent learners being able to employ a wider range of adaptive coping mechanisms. Addy et al (2021) conducted a mixed-method study in Ghana to examine the mental difficulties and coping mechanisms of school-going adolescents. The findings revealed that a majority of learners encountered mental health challenges due to factors such as financial constraints, academic pressure, bullying, struggles in intimate relationships, and spiritual dilemmas. The study also observed that a higher prevalence of mental health challenges was reported among females. The learners

utilized various coping strategies, including isolation, seeking spiritual/religious assistance, and engaging in substance abuse.

In East Africa, the focus has been on the diverse coping strategies employed by learners in different socio-economic and cultural contexts. Research indicates that problem-focused coping and seeking social support are common strategies that contribute positively to psychological well-being. These strategies are particularly effective in communities where social networks and communal ties are strong. Mwananzila and Mueni (2018) sought to determine factors contributing to primary school adolescents' stress and common coping strategies in Moshi, Tanzania. They concluded that high levels of stress affected the adolescents' psychological well-being, with many learners reporting symptoms such as nervousness, anger, anxiety, and lack of concentration. These adolescents lacked awareness of stress signs and symptoms and were not able to devise relevant coping strategies.

Studies in Kenya have highlighted the importance of incorporating cultural practices into coping strategies. In regions where traditional practices and communal activities are integral to daily life, these elements can be leveraged to develop effective coping mechanisms. For example, community-based interventions that involve parents, teachers, and local leaders can create a supportive environment that fosters problem-focused coping among learners. Research by Dray et al. (2017) underscored the significance of the school environment in shaping the coping strategies of learners. Learners often rely on a mix of problem-focused coping, avoidance, and social support to manage the challenges they face. Social support, particularly from family and community members, plays a pivotal role in enhancing psychological well-being. The learners often employ unique coping strategies that are deeply rooted in their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. For instance, traditional practices and community gatherings provide significant psychological support, helping learners navigate their educational and personal challenges.

Problem-focused coping strategies among learners in Kenya have been influenced by the resources available within their communities. Access to educational resources, counseling services, and community support networks plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of these coping strategies. Learners who have access to

supportive environments are more likely to employ adaptive coping mechanisms that enhance their psychological well-being. Thus, the literature on problem-focused coping strategies underscores the importance of context-specific approaches with adaptive coping strategies such as problem-focused coping and seeking social support consistently associated with better psychological outcomes.

2.5.2 Social Support as a Coping Strategy

Social support as a coping strategy is extensively examined in psychological and educational research. Coping strategies encompass various behaviors and actions that individuals use to manage stress and emotional challenges. Social support, specifically, involves seeking assistance, comfort, and reassurance from others, which can significantly alleviate psychological distress (Sanchez, et al, 2018). This strategy is crucial in educational settings where learners face numerous stressors. Emotional support as a coping style acts as a booster for mental wellness among adolescents by offering a safe space where they can express feelings of distress or loneliness and feel heard (Roohi et al., 2020, Hu et al., 2022). Besides, emotional support has been reported to stabilize the mental conditions of young people and shape their resilience in face of stress (Li et al, 2022,). Unlike seeking emotional support, avoidance as a coping strategy relies on short-term distraction and stress reduction which may be harmful and dysfunctional in the long term (Abouammoh, 2020).

In the United States, extensive research highlights the importance of social support for learners' mental health. For example, a study by Zara (2022) found that social support was critical in managing stress and depression among university learners. These findings align with Klonoff-Cohen's (2022) research, which demonstrated that learners often turned to their parents and friends for support when dealing with psychological issues. These studies underscore the pivotal role of social networks in enhancing learners' psychological well-being and academic performance.

European studies also emphasize the significance of social support in educational contexts. Research by Kiel (2023) indicates that social support mitigates adverse physical and mental health effects among learners. The study found that learners who received social support from peers and educators experienced lower levels of stress

and anxiety. Additionally, the European perspective often integrates family and community support systems as critical elements in learners' coping strategies, reflecting a broader cultural emphasis on communal well-being.

In Asia, the concept of social support in coping strategies is equally vital. A study by Chen (2020) in Hong Kong revealed that social support from family and friends significantly reduced academic stress among high school learners. This research highlights the culturally specific ways in which social support functions, noting that Asian learners often rely heavily on familial networks for emotional and psychological support. On the other hand, Brown et al (2023) found that Australian learners who engaged in supportive peer relationships reported better mental health outcomes and higher academic achievement. The study emphasizes the role of school-based programs in fostering supportive environments where learners can develop strong peer connections.

On the African continent, various regional studies provide insights into social support as a coping strategy. In South Africa, research by Van der Walt and Van Rensburg (2022) found that social support from teachers and peers played a critical role in managing stress and promoting resilience among learners. This study highlights the importance of creating supportive school environments to enhance learners' psychological well-being. In West African, studies by Adeyemo and Adeleke (2020), revealed that learners often rely on extended family networks for support. This cultural practice underscores the broader societal role in student well-being, where community and kinship ties are essential in coping with educational stressors.

In North Africa, a study by Elsheikh and Elsheikh (2021) demonstrated that social support from friends and family was crucial in managing academic and personal stress among university learners. This research aligns with findings from other regions, emphasizing the universal importance of social support. Mbarga and Ndikum (2019) from Central Africa, found that social support systems within schools, including peer mentoring programs, were effective in reducing stress and anxiety among learners. These programs provided learners with reliable networks to discuss their problems and seek guidance. Lopez et al (2021) examined 152 children aged between 5 and 7

years in South Africa and found that the use of coping methods starts early in life and the most commonly used coping strategy was social and spiritual support.

In Kenya, Mwayo et al. (2020) found that learners frequently sought social support from peers and teachers to cope with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress. These findings are supported by Othieno, Othieno, and Njenga (2018), who revealed that secondary school learners in Kenya employed adaptive coping mechanisms, including social support, physical activities, and relaxation techniques.

Focusing research by Mutua and Karanja (2022) in Tharaka Nithi found that social support from family, friends, and teachers was crucial in managing stress and enhancing academic performance among learners in this region. This localized perspective highlights the cultural and contextual factors influencing coping strategies in rural and semi-urban settings.

2.5.3 Avoidance as a coping Strategy

Avoidance as a coping strategy has been widely studied across different cultural contexts and educational environments. This coping mechanism involves behaviors and cognitive strategies aimed at evading stressors rather than confronting them directly. While avoidance can provide temporary relief from stress, it often leads to long-term negative outcomes, including increased psychological distress and impaired academic performance. Unlike seeking emotional support, avoidance as a coping strategy relies on short-term distraction and stress reduction which may be harmful and dysfunctional in the long term (Abouammoh et al, 2020).

In the United States, several studies have explored the implications of avoidance as a coping strategy among learners. A study by Johnson and Thompson (2020) found that high school learners who frequently used avoidance strategies experienced higher levels of anxiety and depression. This research highlights the detrimental effects of avoidance on learners' mental health and underscores the need for interventions that promote more adaptive coping mechanisms. Similarly, Smith et al. (2021) demonstrated that avoidance behaviors were linked to lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates among college learners.

European research has also examined avoidance as a coping strategy in educational settings. A study by Müller and Hofmann (2022) revealed that learners who engaged in avoidance behaviors, such as procrastination and withdrawal from social interactions, reported higher stress levels and lower life satisfaction. This aligns with findings from a study by Friese et al. (2021), which indicated that avoidance was a significant predictor of poor mental health outcomes among university learners. These studies emphasize the importance of addressing avoidance behaviors to enhance learners' psychological well-being and academic success.

In Asia, research by Li and Wang (2019) found that avoidance strategies were prevalent among high school learners in China. The study noted that learners often resorted to avoidance due to intense academic pressure and high expectations from parents and teachers. These findings suggest that cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping learners' coping behaviors. Another study by Kim et al. (2020) in South Korea reported similar results, highlighting that avoidance was associated with increased stress and lower academic performance among learners.

Australian studies have also contributed to the understanding of avoidance as a coping strategy. Brown et al (2023) found that avoidance behaviors, such as skipping classes and neglecting assignments, were common among high school learners facing academic difficulties. The research highlighted the need for school-based interventions to help learners develop more effective coping strategies. Moreover, a study by Carvalho (2021) demonstrated that avoidance was linked to higher levels of psychological distress and lower academic engagement among university learners.

In Africa, regional studies have provided valuable insights into avoidance as a coping strategy. Research by Rensburg and Barnard (2020) in South Africa found that learners who used avoidance strategies, such as substance abuse and social withdrawal, experienced significant psychological distress. This study emphasized the need for mental health support services in schools to address these maladaptive coping behaviors. Similarly, research by Adeyemi and Olawale (2021) in West Africa indicated that avoidance was associated with lower academic performance and higher levels of anxiety among secondary school learners.

East African studies, particularly in Kenya, have also examined avoidance as a coping strategy. Research by Mbwayo et al. (2020) found that learners who engaged in avoidance behaviors, such as skipping classes and neglecting studies, reported higher levels of stress and anxiety. This study underscores the importance of addressing avoidance behaviors to improve learners' psychological well-being and academic performance. Additionally, Othieno et al (2018) revealed that secondary school learners in Kenya often used avoidance strategies in response to academic stress, which negatively impacted their mental health. Mutua and Karanja (2022) found that learners who resorted to avoidance behaviors, such as absenteeism and disengagement from school activities, experienced significant academic challenges and psychological distress.

The literature underscores the pervasive use of avoidance as a coping strategy among learners across various cultural and educational contexts. While avoidance may offer short-term relief from stress, it often leads to long-term negative consequences for learners' mental health and academic performance. Addressing avoidance behaviors through targeted interventions and support services is crucial for enhancing learners' psychological well-being and academic success.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Three theories were considered to enhance the empirical report on the relationship between school environment, coping strategies and psychological wellbeing of learners. The theory of Human Functioning and School Organization, Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping and the Six-Factor Model of Psychological Health.

2.6 .1 Theory of Human Functioning and School Organization

In the theory of human functioning and school organization, Markham and Aveyard (2003) proposed that schools should support practical reasoning, diverse perspectives, and a sense of affiliation among learners to promote health-enhancing behaviors.

According to this theory, schools achieve these goals through their 'instructional' and 'regulatory' orders, which focus on academic learning and behavioral norms, respectively. When learners are engaged and committed to these orders, they are more likely to adopt healthy behaviors. Conversely, those who feel disconnected may seek

affiliation with anti-school peer groups and engage in risky behaviors. The theory posits that the flexibility with which schools define 'boundaries', such as the relationship between staff and learners, and the degree to which schooling is learner-centered, are critical factors in building commitment and fostering a supportive school environment.

The theory of human functioning and school organization provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how specific elements of the school environment can impact learners' psychological well-being. Markham and Aveyard's insights are particularly valuable in examining both the positive and negative effects that school context and pedagogical techniques may have on learners' mental health. They argue that exposure to practical reasoning and a strong sense of affiliation are essential for maintaining high levels of psychological health among learners.

In the context of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) at the Junior School level, this theory is especially pertinent. The CBC emphasizes active learner involvement in the educational process, which is designed to prepare learners for their chosen career paths by fostering skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and independent learning. Understanding how the school environment supports or hinders these aspects can provide significant insights into its influence on learners' psychological well-being.

For instance, a supportive school environment that encourages practical reasoning and offers a sense of belonging can enhance learners' psychological resilience. This environment helps learners to navigate academic pressures and social challenges more effectively. Schools that promote a positive organizational culture and prioritize learner-centered approaches can create an atmosphere where learners feel valued and supported, thus contributing to better mental health outcomes.

Conversely, schools that are overly rigid in their boundaries or that fail to engage learners in meaningful ways may inadvertently contribute to psychological distress. Such environments can lead to feelings of isolation, increased stress, and a higher likelihood of learners engaging in maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance or substance abuse. This underscores the importance of flexible, inclusive, and learner-centered school practices in fostering a healthy psychological environment.

Moreover, the theory suggests that the school's role in promoting psychological well-being extends beyond the classroom. Extracurricular activities, peer support programs, and counseling services are also vital components of a supportive school environment. These elements can provide additional avenues for learners to develop practical reasoning skills and build a sense of affiliation, further enhancing their psychological resilience.

Implementing the principles of Markham and Aveyard's theory at the policy and intervention levels can be particularly beneficial for junior schools. Policies that prioritize flexible learning environments, foster strong relationships between staff and learners, and emphasize the development of practical reasoning and affiliation can help create a school culture that supports psychological well-being. Interventions such as teacher training programs, student mentorship schemes, and the integration of mental health education into the curriculum can further reinforce these positive outcomes.

Applying this theory can provide a valuable framework for addressing the unique challenges faced by junior school learners. For example, schools in this region can focus on creating supportive and inclusive environments that cater to the diverse needs of their learners. By doing so, they can help mitigate the negative effects of stress and enhance the overall psychological well-being of their learners. Thus, the theory of human functioning and school organization offers a robust framework for understanding the complex interplay between school environment and learner psychological well-being.

By fostering practical reasoning, diverse perspectives, and a sense of affiliation, schools can create environments that not only enhance academic performance but also support the mental health and well-being of their learners. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of the Competency-Based Curriculum and can provide valuable insights for both policy-making and practical interventions in junior schools.

2.6.2 Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping

The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), provides a robust framework for understanding the complex interplay between the environment, individual coping strategies, and psychological well-being. This theory posits that stress is a dynamic and transactional experience, shaped by the continuous interaction between an individual and their environment. The behavioral and psychological outcomes of this interaction are contingent upon how the individual perceives and responds to environmental stressors.

According to Lazarus and Folkman, stress arises when individuals appraise a situation as challenging or exceeding their resources and threatening their well-being. Coping, therefore, involves cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage the demands of this stressful situation. This perspective emphasizes the dyadic interaction between the individual and their environment, suggesting that coping is not a static response, but a dynamic process influenced by the interplay of personal traits and situational factors.

Transactional researchers such as Kumar (2019) further elucidate that coping responses are determined by the match between an individual's personality traits and the specific stressors they encounter. Consequently, the use of coping strategies is a continuous and adaptive process, influenced by the individual's characteristics, the nature of the environment, and the level of stress experienced. This dynamic exercise underscores the importance of understanding how individual differences and contextual factors contribute to the effectiveness of various coping mechanisms.

One key implication of the Transactional Theory is that adaptation to stress is shaped by the inherent traits of the individual and the environmental context. Problem-focused coping, which involves directly addressing the source of stress, is generally considered an adaptive and effective strategy. It enables individuals to confront stressors and develop resilience, thereby maintaining good psychological health. For instance, a student who encounters academic challenges might employ problem-focused strategies such as seeking help from teachers or organizing study groups, which can mitigate stress and enhance learning outcomes.

However, not all coping strategies are adaptive. In some cases, individuals may resort to maladaptive strategies such as avoidance, which involves evading the stressor rather than confronting it. While avoidance can provide temporary relief, it often leads to negative long-term outcomes, including increased psychological distress and impaired functioning. For learners, avoidance might manifest as skipping classes, neglecting assignments, or engaging in substance abuse, all of which can exacerbate stress and undermine psychological well-being.

The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping is particularly relevant to the study of junior school learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This theory guided the research by highlighting the active (problem-focused) and passive (avoidance) coping strategies employed by learners to manage stressors arising from the school environment. Understanding these strategies is crucial for developing interventions that promote adaptive coping and enhance learners' psychological resilience.

In this study, the theory underscores the importance of creating supportive school environments that facilitate adaptive coping mechanisms. Schools can play a pivotal role in shaping how learners perceive and respond to stress. By fostering a positive organizational culture, providing access to mental health resources, and promoting problem-solving skills, schools can help learners develop effective coping strategies. Additionally, teacher training programs can equip educators with the skills to identify and support learners who may be struggling with maladaptive coping behaviors.

Moreover, the Transactional Theory highlights the need for individualized approaches to stress management. Given that coping responses are influenced by personal traits and environmental factors, interventions should be tailored to address the unique needs of each student. This personalized approach can enhance the effectiveness of coping strategies and contribute to better psychological outcomes. Thus, Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between the school environment, coping strategies, and psychological well-being among junior school learners. By recognizing the dynamic and interactive nature of stress and coping, this theory offers valuable insights for developing interventions that promote adaptive coping and enhance learners' resilience. This approach is particularly pertinent in the context of Tharaka Nithi County, where

understanding the specific stressors and coping mechanisms of junior school learners can inform targeted strategies to support their mental health and academic success.

2.6.3 Six-Factor Model of Psychological Well-being

The Six-Factor Model of Psychological Well-being, developed by Carol Ryff (2008), provides a comprehensive and systematic framework for understanding the components that contribute to an individual's psychological health, contentment, and overall happiness. Ryff's model identifies six core dimensions that are essential for optimal human functioning and well-being: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Each of these represents a crucial aspect of psychological well-being and offers a distinct pathway through which individuals can achieve a balanced and fulfilling life.

Self-Acceptance involves a positive evaluation of oneself and one's past life. It reflects the extent to which individuals accept their flaws and are at peace with their personal history and current self. Self-acceptance is crucial for mental health, as it enables individuals to embrace their strengths and weaknesses, fostering a stable sense of identity. The dimension of Positive Relationships with others highlights the importance of having warm, trusting interpersonal relationships. It involves the ability to form and maintain close, meaningful connections with others, which are essential for emotional support and well-being. Positive relationships provide a buffer against stress and contribute significantly to life satisfaction.

Autonomy refers to the capacity to make independent decisions and regulate one's behavior based on personal values and beliefs. It emphasizes self-determination and the ability to resist social pressures, which are critical for developing a sense of agency and control over one's life. Environmental Mastery pertains to the ability to manage and navigate one's environment effectively. It involves creating contexts that align with personal needs and values, thereby enhancing the ability to achieve personal goals.

Self-efficacy is indicative of one's competence in managing life situations and exerting control over external circumstances.

Purpose in Life encapsulates having a sense of direction and meaning in life. It involves setting and pursuing meaningful goals that provide a sense of fulfillment and motivation. A strong sense of purpose is associated with greater resilience and a proactive approach to life's challenges. The Personal Growth dimension reflects the ongoing process of developing one's potential and experiencing continuous improvement. It includes embracing new experiences, learning from them, and striving for self-improvement. Personal growth is fundamental to achieving a dynamic and evolving sense of self.

Ryff's model underscores that psychological well-being is not static but rather a dynamic interplay between the individual and their environment. Achieving well-being involves balancing challenging and rewarding life events, highlighting the importance of adaptive responses to life's demands. The Six-Factor Model of Psychological Well-being is particularly relevant in the context of the study on the moderating effect of selected coping strategies on the relationship between the school environment and psychological well-being among junior school learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This model serves as a foundation for understanding how different aspects of the school environment, such as social interactions, physical settings, and pedagogical approaches, affect learners' psychological health.

The model's dimensions offer a structured approach to evaluate the dependent variable, psychological well-being and its interaction with the school environment and coping strategies. For instance, a supportive school environment that fosters positive relationships with teachers and peers can enhance learners' self-acceptance and autonomy. Similarly, a well-equipped and resourceful physical environment can improve environmental mastery and personal growth.

By applying Ryff's model, the study aims to explore how various elements of the school environment contribute to or hinder the psychological well-being of learners. It also examines the role of coping strategies, both adaptive and maladaptive, in moderating these relationships. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights into how educational institutions can create environments that support mental health and well-being.

Furthermore, Ryff's model highlights the importance of addressing each dimension of psychological well-being to achieve a comprehensive understanding of learners' mental health. Interventions and policies aimed at improving the school environment should consider how they can enhance self-acceptance, foster positive relationships, promote autonomy, improve environmental mastery, provide a sense of purpose, and encourage personal growth. This holistic approach can lead to more effective strategies for supporting the psychological well-being of junior school learners in Tharaka Nithi County, thereby contributing to their overall academic and personal development.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework showing the relationship of the study variables is shown in Figure 1.

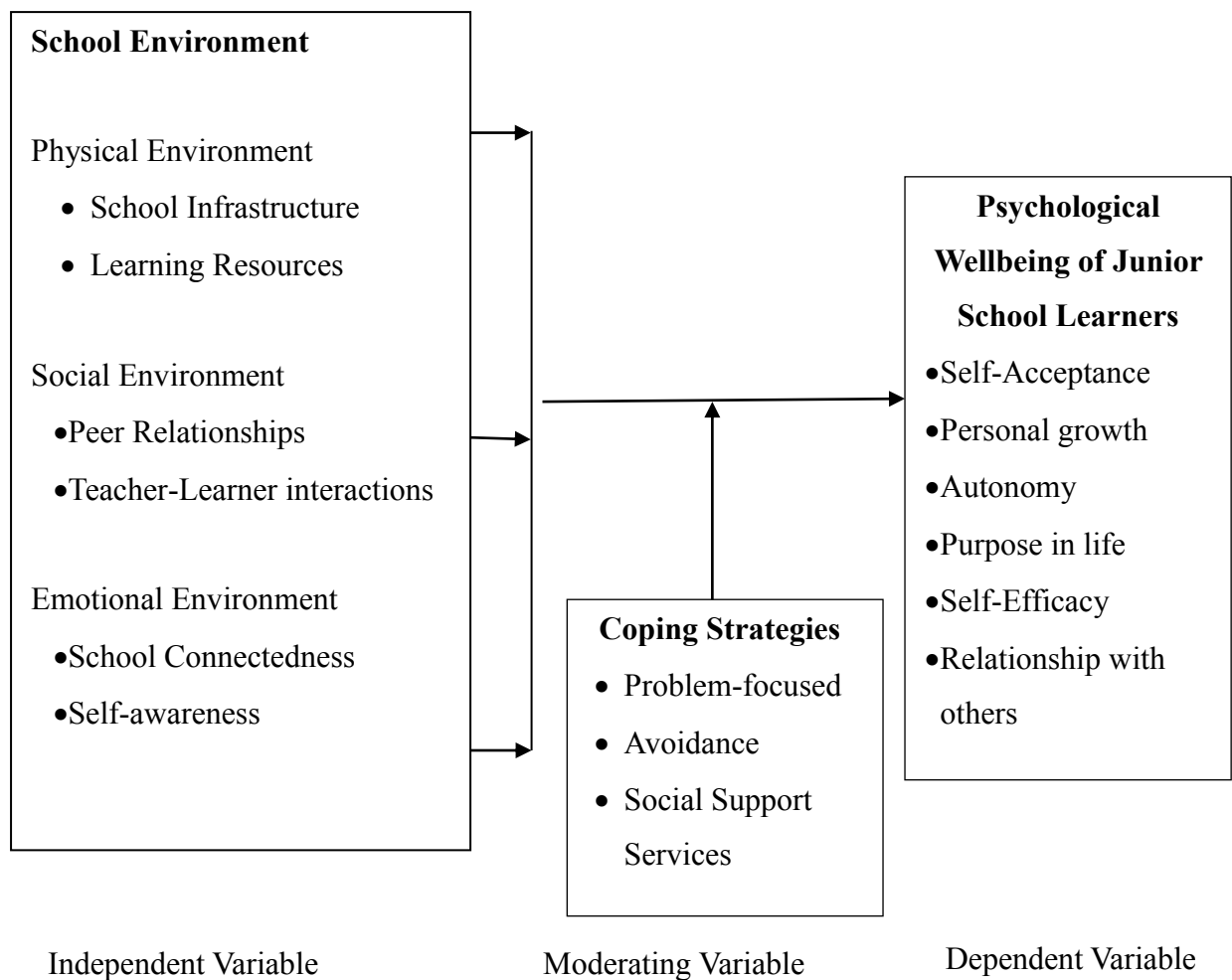


Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

The independent variable in this study is the school environment, which is divided into three key dimensions. Firstly, the physical environment includes school facilities and learning resources, encompassing the infrastructure and availability of educational materials that support or hinder the learning process. Secondly, the social environment focuses on peer relationships and teacher-learner interactions, highlighting the quality of social interactions and the nature of relationships within the school community. Lastly, the emotional environment addresses school connectedness and self-awareness, reflecting the emotional climate of the school.

The dependent variable in this framework is the psychological well-being of junior school learners. Drawing from Carol Ryff's Six-Factor Model of Psychological Well-

being, psychological well-being is characterized by six dimensions: self-acceptance, personal growth, autonomy, self-efficacy, purpose in life, and relationship with others.

Coping strategies act as the moderating variable in this framework. They refer to the methods that learners use to handle stress and adverse situations. These strategies can either enhance or mitigate the impact of the school environment on psychological well-being. Coping strategies are categorized into adaptive strategies, such as problem-focused coping and seeking social support, and maladaptive strategies, such as avoidance and substance use.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya, focusing on the seven sub-counties. The sub-counties include Meru South, Maara, Tharaka North, Ciakariga,

Tharaka South, Igamba Ng'ombe, and Muthambi. Tharaka Nithi County was strategically selected due to its potential to offer valuable insights into the school environment, coping strategies, and psychological well-being of junior school learners in the region.

3.2 Research Design

In this study, both descriptive survey and correlational research designs were used. According to Ranganathan and Wadhwa (2019), a descriptive survey examines a sample of a population to provide a quantitative picture of its trends, attitudes, views, and behaviour. In this study, it gave the researcher the opportunity to describe the information about school environment and psychological wellbeing as they were without manipulating anything. According to Bhandari (2021), a correlational research design establishes relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. This design was deemed appropriate because it allowed the researcher to determine the relationship between the independent variables (School Environment) and dependent variable (Psychological wellbeing among learners).

3.3 Population of the study

The target population for this research encompassed 6,274 grade 8 Junior School learners, 446 grade 8 class teachers and 7 sub-County Quality Assurance and Standard Officers (SQASO) in Tharaka Nithi County, resulting to 6,727. The population distribution was as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Target Population

Sub county	JS SCHS	Grade 8 learners	Grade class teachers	SQASO	Total
Tharaka South	65	869	65	1	935
Igamba Ng'ombe	68	791	68	1	860
Meru South	69	1266	68	1	1335
Muthambi	47	536	52	1	589

Maara	62	1178	80	1	1259
Tharaka North	63	942	63	1	1006
Chiakariga	46	692	50	1	743
Total		6274	446	7	6727

Source: County Education Office (2024)

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Sampling is a crucial technique employed in the selection of individuals from a population or a subset of the population. The selected sample serves as the basis for making inferences and estimating characteristics of the entire population. The sampling procedure involved systematically selecting a portion of the population that was used for testing hypotheses and drawing conclusions about the entire population.

3.4.1 Sample Size Determination

The study adopted the Yamane method to determine the sample size of the respondents to take part in the study. The sample size for participating respondents arrived at based on Yamane formula is:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + Ne^2)}$$

where n = Sample size

N = Target population

e = Error term

N (target population) = 6,727

e (error rate) = 0.05

Thus: $n = \frac{6,727}{1 + 6,727(0.05)^2}$

$$= \frac{6,727}{1 + 16.8175}$$

$$n = \frac{6,727}{17.8175}$$

$$n \approx 377.55$$

The sample size will therefore be 377

Table 2*Sampling Grid*

Sub county	JS SCHS	Grade 8 learners	Grade class teachers	SQASO	Total
Sampling Technique		Random	Purposive	Purposive	
Tharaka South	6	45	6	1	52
Igamba Ng'ombe	4	41	6	1	48
Meru South	9	67	6	1	74
Muthambi	3	28	4	1	33
Maara	8	62	8	1	71
Tharaka North	6	49	6	1	56
Chiakariga	4	36	6	1	43
Total		328	42	7	377

3.4.2 Sampling Procedure

A multi-stage sampling method was used to select different categories of respondents from the target population. To facilitate a proportionate sample of respondents participating in the study, stratified random sampling was used to get the schools of different categories, with the sub-County as the sampling unit from which a proportionate sample was drawn. Purposive sampling was used to identify Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Moreover, the researcher employed simple random sampling technique to select the learners and class teachers who participated in the data collection process at the school level. The aforementioned procedure involved the placement of cards labeled with the terms 'YES' and 'NO' within a container, followed by a subsequent randomization process. Participants who selected cards labeled with the word "yes" were chosen. This measure ensured that each learner was provided with an equal chance of being selected.

3.5 Research Instruments

The study administered a psychometric test instrument to the learners (Appendix II) The psychometric test instrument included a Psychological Wellbeing test, a Cope Scale Indicator (CSI) and a School Environment Scale (SES) to collect data from the sampled learners. The researcher also used a questionnaire to collect data from the sampled class teachers (Appendix III) and an interview schedule (Appendix IV) to collect data from Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers.

3.5.1 Learners' Psychometric Test Instrument

The psychometric test instrument administered to learners was constructed from items adopted from psychological Wellbeing Scale, School Environment Scale and Coping Strategies Indicator.

3.5.1.1 Psychological Wellbeing Test

The present research adapted the PWBS proposed by Ryff (Díaz et al, 2006; Ryff, 2008) for the evaluation of children and adolescents' psychological well-being. It is a six-item psychometric scale measuring psychological well-being. The scale uses the single-item dimension approach. Using a single item per dimension has proven to be a valid strategy to measure well-being (Angulo-Brunet et al., 2020; Petrillo et al., 2015) and it has an important advantage when it is used with children and adolescents in order to reduce cognitive fatigue. According to the Ryff Scale Psychological, well-being is associated to autonomy, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, personal growth, and purpose in life. Table 3: shows the item number and what they represent in the scale.

Table 3

Ryff's Brief Version scale for Children and Adolescents

Item Number	What It Represents in the Scale
1	Self-Acceptance
2	Environmental Mastery
3	Positive Relations with Others
4	Autonomy
5	Purpose in Life
6	Personal Growth

3.5.1.2 School Environmental Scale (SES)

The School Environment Scale (SES) is a research instrument that measures the social-psychological aspects of a school environment. The SES is based on the conceptual framework developed by Rudolf Moos, which suggests that a school environment consists of three dimensions: relationship, personal development, and system maintenance and change. These dimensions are further divided into 10 subscales, including cohesion, academic emphasis, teacher support, order and

organization, safety, student involvement, task orientation, innovation, rule clarity, and student goal orientation.

School Environmental Scale (SES) is a 36-item self-report questionnaire developed by Nwafor (2017). Some statements have been modified to align with the level of learners and the research objectives. The SES is typically administered as a self-report questionnaire to staff and learners, with separate versions available for elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools. Respondents are asked to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements about their school environment, using a five-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicate worse psychological health conditions and lower scores show better psychological health conditions. The SES has been widely used in educational research to examine the relationships between school environment and various outcomes, such as academic achievement, learner engagement teacher burnout and school climate. The instrument has been found to have good psychometric properties, including high internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and validity.

3.5.1.3 The Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI)

The Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI) is a self-report measure of situational coping encompassing the strategies of avoidance, problem solving and seeking social support. Problem Solving Scale assesses instrumental problem-oriented approaches to active management of stressors and is derivative of primitive “flight” tendencies. Seeking Social Support scale measures attempt at human contact during times of duress for the comfort such contact provides.

Avoidance Scale reflects tendencies to escape the problem, both by means of physical and psychological withdrawal, for example, through distraction or and is derivative of “flight” tendencies. The respondents are expected to state the level to which they agree or disagree to the given statements answering this question; which of the following statements most accurately describes what you do when you experience a stressful situation? The Answer Format was 1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree; 3.Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree); 4= Disagree and 5=Strongly Disagree. Three subscale scores can be calculated by summing responses to appropriate items, higher scores indicate greater use of the strategy. Higher scores on Problem solving and seeking

social support, and lower scores on avoidance indicate more adjusted coping strategies.

3.5.2 Questionnaire for class Teachers

The structured questionnaire for class teachers consisted of four sections. The class teachers were expected to give their perceptions about the learners based on the study variables. Section one consisted of questions on demographic information, section two consisted of questions on psychological wellbeing, section three will consist of questions on school environment and section four consisted of questions on coping strategies. A Likert scale consisting of five response questions where the teachers were required to indicate the level of their agreement on the provided statements were utilized.

3.5.3 Interview Schedule

The Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers being stakeholders in the education system were interviewed using a structured interview schedule. The Questions were based on the officers' views about learners. The interview schedule was designed to include open-ended questions intended to encourage comprehensive responses and provide valuable insights from the respondents. To ensure accuracy and depth in data collection, the interviews were audio-recorded for subsequent transcription and in-depth analysis.

3.6 Piloting of the Study Instruments

According to Tseng and Sim, (2021), the ideal sample for use in piloting can range from 10% to 30% of the population. The study sampled 10 % of the sampled Junior Schools for piloting from three sub-counties in the neighboring Kitui County. Specifically, 48 learners, 4 class teachers and one Quality Assurance and Standards Officer were used for pilot study. The schools that were used for piloting were excluded from the final study. Piloting of the instruments was carried out to establish how valid they were and enable the study to identify, modify and/or remove the items that brought ambiguity (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). Piloting and pretesting enabled the questionnaires to get familiar with the data collection and analysis procedure for this study.

3.6.1 Validity of the Instruments

The study ascertained face, content and Construct validity of the instruments. To confirm face and content validity, the research instruments were subjected to a thorough assessment involving discussions with research experts at Chuka University. Their invaluable insights, corrections, and recommendations played a pivotal role in validating the instruments. The responses provided by pilot study participants were meticulously examined to ensure content relevance, representativeness and their alignment with the research variables. These evaluations confirmed the validity of the research instruments. To ascertain construct validity, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted, subjecting each instrument's items to rigorous analysis. Items with factor loadings exceeding the threshold of 0.4 were retained for further analysis, while those falling below this criterion were excluded.

3.6.2 Reliability of the Instruments

The reliability of this study was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient technique. The internal consistency index was created to be used with sections that could feature questions with ambiguous or incorrect answers. Cohen and Swerdlik (2020) state that this approach has the benefit of just requiring one test administration. Pilot testing and supervisors review further enhanced the reliability of the instruments by identifying and addressing potential areas that needed clarity and interpretation.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher sought approval from the relevant authorities. The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from Chuka University and clearance from the Ethics Review Committee (Appendix V). The researcher then applied for a Permit from NACOSTI, and presented it to the Ministry of Education office at the county level. Once the research permit was acquired, a formal introduction to the County Education Office in Tharaka Nithi County was made. At the sub county level, the researcher leveraged the permit to obtain permission to access the sampled schools through the respective head teachers. The researcher then visited the sampled schools where she introduced herself and sought permission to administer the instruments.

Before administering the questionnaires and conducting interviews, a thorough explanation emphasizing the preservation of confidentiality was provided to the participants. This explanation not only served to clarify the research process but also fostered a sense of rapport between the researcher and the participants. The researcher then administered the questionnaires to the sampled respondents ensuring that all necessary information was systematically captured. Once the questionnaires were completed, the researcher collected them and gratitude was extended to the participants for their invaluable contribution. In addition to questionnaire administration, the researcher personally conducted interviews with the Sub county Quality Assurance and Standards Officers.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data obtained from the study was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. The analysis was based on the four objectives of the study. Prior to analysis, quantitative data was cleaned, checked for completeness and appropriately coded. Diagnostic tests were performed to ensure data suitability for further analysis, maintaining data integrity and reliability.

3.8.1 Diagnostic Tests

This included tests for normality, collinearity, autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity. Normality test was based on Shapiro-Wilk test, a Shapiro-Wilk statistic greater than 0.5 (>0.5) indicates a normally distributed data. Presence or absence of multicollinearity was tested based on Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), VIF value less than 10 being acceptable. Autocorrelation test was based on Durbin-Watson test, $1.5 < d < 2.5$ being the acceptable range for the Durbin-Watson statistics. To test for the heteroscedasticity, Koenker test was used, p-value >0.5 indicating a condition of homoscedasticity (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2015, Tabachnick & Fidel, 2015).

3.8.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, facilitated by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The study included four objectives and corresponding hypotheses, tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

The first objective examined the relationship between the school physical environment and the psychological well-being of Junior School learners. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, and percentages) summarized the data. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson correlation analysis, determined the strength and direction of the relationship, providing a correlation coefficient (r).

The second objective explored the relationship between the school social environment and psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics summarized the data, while Pearson correlation analysis assessed the relationship, indicated by the correlation coefficient (r).

The third objective investigated the relationship between the school emotional environment and psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. Pearson correlation analysis evaluated the relationship, with the correlation coefficient (r) indicating its strength and direction.

The fourth objective assessed the influence of coping strategies on the relationship between the school environment and psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics was calculated for coping strategies, school environment variables (physical, social, emotional), and psychological well-being. Multiple regression analysis examined the moderating influence of coping strategies. .

3.8.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from Sub County Quality Assurances and Standards Officers obtained through interview was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analyses is a process of segmentation, categorization and relinking of aspects of the data prior to final interpretation. To this end the following steps were undertaken: Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim or near verbatim (Willig, 2008) and each transcript read, and short notes made in order to have a summary of statements of the main points of each respondent.

Duplications within the main points of the respondents were deleted to reduce the number of similar categories and remain with relevant text. The reduced categories were then grouped together and labeled as themes. According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) a theme is an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas. Factors from each transcript that fit in specific categories will be grouped together.

Specific themes were analyzed during the study and auxiliary themes developed in the process. These content-based themes were developed in line with literature reviewed, theory and objectives. These themes included relationship between school physical environment and psychological well-being, relationship between School social environment and psychological well-being, relationship between school emotional environment and psychological well-being and relationship between school environment, coping strategies and psychological well-being. For confidentiality, each respondent's name was changed to a case number when reporting findings according to recommendations of Berg (2001).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

First and foremost, consent was sought from the Graduate School of Chuka University, ensuring full compliance with institutional regulations (Appendix VI). Additionally, the study secured ethical clearance from the National Commission of Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) to meet national research standards (Appendix VII). The researcher took a proactive approach to ethics by ensuring that each participant granted informed consent before being included in the study. This informed consent process underscores the voluntary nature of participation, affording individuals the freedom to decide whether they wish to partake in the research (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

Furthermore, stringent measures were employed to guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The identities of the respondents were kept strictly confidential, and they were not required to provide their names. The researcher also articulated the nature and purpose of the research to the participants, dispelling any concerns or misconceptions about the research objectives. To safeguard the integrity of the data and ensure privacy, no private or sensitive questions were included in the

questionnaires. This conscientious approach minimizes the potential for harm or discomfort to the participants, fostering an environment of trust and ethical research conduct. To mitigate the risk of research plagiarism, all sources of information utilized in the study were meticulously cited, adhering to established academic integrity standards.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The study set out to establish the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing among Junior School learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. It also sought to ascertain the moderating influence of selected coping strategies in the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing among junior School Learners.

4.1.2 Response Rate

Data was obtained from 325 grade eight learners, 41 grade eight class teachers and 5 Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SQASO) in Tharaka Nithi County in upper Eastern region in Kenya. This means that 371 individuals out of the anticipated 377 participated in the study yielding a return rate of 98.41% which according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019) is above the threshold for analysis.

4.2 Demographic Information

The study sought information from Junior School learners, their class teachers and SQASOs from the study area. This section presents demographic information of each category of study participants.

4.2.1 Grade Eight Learners' Demographic Information

Grade eight learners were asked information about their gender, age, school category and school information. Table 4 presents a summary of the findings. Information obtained show that there were slightly more females (52.9%) than males (47.1%) in the study sample probably implying success in affirmative action implemented in the area to improve enrolment and completion rates of girls in basic education. Information on age show that a majority of the grade 8 learners were in the 13-15 years (78.4%) compared to those less than 13 years (7.4%) or more than 15 years (14.2%) with the mean age for the class being 13.60 years. Finding therefore show that a majority of the learners were of the right age for the class since learners are expected to join grade one at around 6 years.

Table 4*Grade Eight Learners' Demographic Information*

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	153	47.1
	Female	172	52.9
	Total	325	100.0
Age in years	Less than 13	24	7.4
	13 -15	295	90.8
	More than 15	6	1.8
	Total	325	100.0
School Category	Boarding	144	44.3
	Day	181	55.7
	Total	325	100.0
School Composition	Mixed	324	99.7
	Boys	1	0.3
	Total	325	100.0

Information on school category show as was expected, there are more day schools (55.7%) compared to boarding schools (44.3%) even though the proportion of boarding schools is still high compared to other counties within the country. This high concentration of boarding schools for this category of learners could be attributed to the unique challenges that learners face in the county encouraging a greater proportion of parents or guardians to place their children in boarding schools. Data obtained about school composition show that almost all schools are coeducation (99.7%) integrating learners of both gender. Information obtained on grade eight learners therefore show a fair distribution of respondents' characteristics with possible ramification on their psychological wellbeing thus significant for this study.

4.2.2. Grade Eight Class Teachers' Demographic Information

The study also sought to assess the demographic characteristics of grade eight class teachers being the people with a more direct interaction with the learners and therefore the immediate witnesses to the dynamics of their interaction with the learning environment. Information sought included their age, gender, qualification, work load and terms of service. Other information sought is learner population in their classes and whether or not they have been trained as counselors. Table 5 presents a summary of data obtained. Information obtained as regards gender show that there were slightly more female (53.7%) than male class teacher (46.3%) implying an almost gender parity as regards deployment of the Junior School teachers as class

teacher. It also auger well for affirmative action especially for females who are usually underrepresented in other fields.

Table 5

Grade Eight Class Teachers' Demographic Information

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	19	46.3
	Female	22	53.7
	Total	41	100.0
Age in Years	Below 30	22	53.7
	30-40	16	39.0
	41-50	2	4.9
	Above 50	1	2.4
	Total	41	100.0
Qualification	Diploma	4	9.8
	Degree	30	73.2
	Masters	7	17.0
	Total	41	100.0
Terms of Service	Contract	27	65.9
	Permanent	14	34.1
	Total	41	100.0
Work load	Below 25	14	34.1
	25-28	17	41.5
	More than 28	10	24.4
	Total	41	100.0
Class size	Less than 40	24	58.5
	40-45	9	20.0
	More than 45	8	19.5
	Total	41	100.0
Trained Counsellor	Yes	23	56.1
	No	18	43.9
	Total	41	100.0

Information on age show that a majority of the junior school teachers were generally young with a significant proportion being either below 30 year (53.7%) or 30 – 40 years (39.0%) compared to those more than 40 years (7.3%). Data on grade eight class teachers' qualification show that a majority were graduates with bachelor degree qualification (73.2%) compared to those with diploma (9.8%) or masters (17.0%). Findings therefore illustrated that all the grade eight class teachers were trained professionals with varying academic qualification. Information on their terms of service show that a majority (65.9%) were on contract compared to those on permanent and pensionable terms (34.1%) implying that a majority of the class teachers themselves are facing work related challenges and may not be able to

adequately provide for the needs of their learners. Data on workload show that about a third of the class teachers (34.1%) had less than 25 lessons, less than a half (41.5%) had between 25 and 28 lessons while about a quarter (24.4%) had more than 28 lessons. Findings show that a majority of the class teachers (65.9%) have a heavy teaching load besides their administrative responsibilities and could be finding it difficult to provide adequately for the psychological needs of the learners. Information sought on class size show that less than half of the schools sampled (41.5%) had classes with more than 40 learners implying that a majority had average learner population. Lastly, data obtained showed that a majority of the class teachers (56.1%) were trained as counselors implying that they could adequately provide for the psychological needs of the learners if conditions allowed.

4.2.3. Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers' Information

Sub-county Quality Assurance and Standard Officers were requested to indicate their experience in the position and the period they have served in the current station. The findings in table 6.

Table 6

SQASO Demographic Information

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Experience as a SQASO	Less than 5 years	1	20.0
	5-10	3	60.0
	More than 10	1	20.0
	Total	5	100.0
Years in the current station	Below 2 years	2	40.0
	2-5	2	40.0
	More 5	1	20.0
	Total	5	100.0

Information obtained showed that a majority of the SQASO's (80.0%) had work experience of at least 5 years a period considered long enough to enable them gain relevant work experience necessary for them to provide valuable information required for this study. Similarly, it was illustrated that more than half (60.0%) had worked in their current stations to enable them have an understanding of the on goings at their work stations. Each of the officers were assigned pseudo identities P1 to P5 in

adherence to ethical requirement that their identities be protected in reporting data obtained from them.

4.3 Diagnostic Tests

Prior to analysis, data obtained was subjected to a series of diagnostic tests in order to assess its suitability for the planned correlation study. The tests included normality, collinearity, auto-correlation, and heteroscedasticity tests. Subsequently the data was assessed for reliability and construct validity tests to ascertain the suitability of not only the variables but also the sub-variables as well as those of the items (statements) for use. This section presents findings of each of these preliminary tests.

4.3.1. Normality Test

Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine whether data were normally distributed. Table 8 presents results obtained.

Table 7

Normality Test

Construct/Sub-construct	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Psychological Wellbeing	0.174	325	0.000	0.854	325	0.000
Physical Environment	0.093	325	0.000	0.973	325	0.000
Social Environment	0.077	325	0.000	0.979	325	0.000
Emotional Environment	0.090	325	0.087	0.968	325	0.000
Problem Focussed	0.105	325	0.000	0.956	325	0.000
Avoidance	0.068	325	0.001	0.961	325	0.000
Social Support Services	0.057	325	0.014	0.980	325	0.000

According to the results, Shapiro-Wilk test statistics varied from 0.854 ($p < 0.001$) for psychological wellbeing to 0.980 ($p < 0.001$) for social support services. According to Tabachnick, Fidell and Ullman's (2007) data is normally distributed if the Shapiro-Wilk statistic test yields a non-significant result (Sig value of more than .05). In this respect, since all the variables had significant Shapiro Wilk test statistics, it can be deduced that items of all study variables were not normally distributed.

4.3.2. Multi-collinearity Test

Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were used to evaluate multi-collinearity. Table 9 presents study findings.

Table 8*Collinearity Test*

Model	Variables	Tolerance	VIF
PEntv & PWB	PEntv, PWB	0.987	1.973
SEntv & PWB	SEntv, PWB	0.946	2.161
EEntv & PWB	EEntv, PWB	0.949	1.982
SchEntv, CI & PWB	SchEntv, CI, PWB	0.956	1.990

Key; PEntv-Physical Environment, SEntv- Social Environment, EEntv -Emotional Environment, CI- Coping Interventions, PWB-Psychological Well-Being

Data in Table 8 show that VIF values for the models ranged from 1.973 (Physical Environment and psychological wellbeing model) to 2.161 (Social Environment and psychological wellbeing model). There was a tolerance range of 0.946 to 0.987. Findings therefore showed that there was no threat of multi-collinearity according to Razani and Wah (2011), who indicated that VIF values between 1.5 and 10 show lack of multi-collinearity.

4.3.3 Auto-correlation Test

The Durbin-Watson test was used to evaluate auto-correlation. The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9*Durbin-Watson Test*

Model	Variables	Durbin Watson Test
PEntv & PWB	PEntv, PWB	1.587
SEntv & PWB	SEntv, PWB	1.759
EEntv & PWB	EEntv, PWB	2.232
SchEntv, CI & PWB	SchEntv, CI, PWB	1.762

Key; PEntv-Physical Environment, SEntv- Social Environment, EEntv -Emotional Environment, CI- Coping Interventions, PWB-Psychological Well-Being
Durbin-Watson's values (d) for the models varied from 1.587 for the physical environment and psychological well-being model to 2.232 for emotional environment and psychological wellbeing model. Since all the models have Durbin Watson values between 1.5 and 2.5, it is reasonable to presume that data obtained do not exhibit first-order linear autocorrelation.

4.3.4. Heteroscedasticity

Koenker test was used to test for heteroscedasticity of the models. Results obtained were as shown in Table 10.

Table 10

<i>Heteroscedasticity</i>			
Model	Variables	Koenker Test	
		LM	Sig.
PEnvnt & PWB	PEnvnt, PWB	1.725	0.497
SEnvnt & PWB	SEnvnt, PWB	2.971	0.285
EEnvnt & PWB	EEnvnt, PWB	1.993	0.429
SchEnvnt, CI & PWB	SchEnvnt, CI, PWB	2.382	0.357

Key; PEnvnt-Physical Environment, SEnvnt- Social Environment, EEnvnt -Emotional Environment, CI- Coping Interventions, PWB-Psychological Well-Being

Results obtained show that p values for the Koenker test varied from 0.285 for the social environment and psychological well-being model to 0.497 for the physical environment and psychological wellbeing model when the models for all the parameters were evaluated for heteroscedasticity. The likelihood of heteroscedasticity was ruled out since $p > 0.05$ for each of the model constructs. The results for diagnostic tests therefore showed that data obtained satisfied requirements for homoscedasticity, auto-correlation, and collinearity, though failed the normality test. This means that variables could only be appropriate for non-parametric analysis in testing hypotheses.

4.3.5. Reliability and Construct Validity

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between school environment, coping strategies and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Study variables included psychological wellbeing, school environment and coping strategies. School environment was measured at three levels including physical environment, social environment and emotional environment while coping strategies was measured based on problem focus, avoidance and social support services. Each variable/sub-variable was tested based on a set of elements or statements. The statements and variables/sub-variables were subjected to reliability and construct validity tests to ascertain their suitability for use. Reliability of the variables were based on Cronbach's Alpha test while

suitability of the statements was assessed based on item to total correlation and factor loadings from exploratory factor analysis tests. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was used to perform exploratory factor analysis (EFA). This section presents results obtained.

4.3.5.1 Reliability and Construct Validity of Psychological Wellbeing Items

Psychological wellbeing of the grade eight learners was measured using nine indicators. The indicators were rated on a five-Likert scale with 1 denoting Strongly Agree, 2 denoting Agree, 3 Neutral, 4 denoting Disagree and finally 5 indicating Strongly Disagree. The Cronbach Alpha for the scale was high at 0.803. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 11.

Table 11

Reliability and Construct Validity of Psychological Wellbeing Statements

Statements	Factor Loading	Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
I feel happy about myself	0.527	0.399	0.795
I feel confident about myself	0.656	0.523	0.782
I feel positive about myself	0.696	0.569	0.773
I am good at managing my daily responsibilities	0.566	0.442	0.790
People are friendly to me	0.529	0.406	0.794
Generally, people are welcoming towards me	0.674	0.552	0.776
I have enough choice about how I spend my time	0.647	0.518	0.780
I feel that I learn a lot of things these days	0.712	0.588	0.770
I feel positive about my future	0.602	0.477	0.788
Cronbach's alpha =0.803			

Results show that all the factor loadings were above the acceptable threshold of 0.4 and ranged from 0.527 to 0.712. Item to total correlations scores ranged from 0.399 to 0.588. Therefore, all the items under psychological wellbeing were retained for further analysis since reliability and construct validity was confirmed.

4.3.5.2 Reliability and Construct Validity of School Environment Items

School environment was measured at three levels including physical environment, social environment and emotional environment each with its own 2 sub-variables.

Reliability and Construct Validity of Physical Environment Items

School physical environment was assessed based on school facility and learning resources. School facility had six indicators while learning resources had five indicators. The indicators were rated on a five-Likert scale with 1 denoting Strongly Agree, 2 denoting Agree, 3 denoting Neutral, 4 denoting Disagree and 5 indicating Strongly Disagree. The Cronbach Alpha for school facility was fair at 0.697. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 12.

Table 12

Reliability and Construct Validity of School Facility Statements

Statements	Factor Loading	Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
I am not satisfied with the condition of school buildings	0.649	0.416	0.693
My school is usually not clean	0.401	0.379	0.518
The classrooms are well equipped	0.672	0.396	0.581
My school has comfortable desks and chairs	0.661	0.411	0.491
My school has security measures (such as CCTV cameras, Security Guards)	0.488	0.405	0.674
My school has safety measures (such as First AID Kits,)	0.564	0.347	0.556

Cronbach's alpha =0.697

Results show that all the factor loadings were above the acceptable threshold of 0.4 and ranged from 0.401 to 0.649. Item to total correlations scores ranged from 0.347 to 0.416. Therefore, all the items under school facility were retained for further analysis since reliability and construct validity was confirmed.

Cronbach Alpha for learning resources was fair at 0.709. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 13.

Table 13

Reliability and Construct Validity of Learning Resource Statements

My teachers often teach using;	Factor Loading	Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
Print resources (such as textbooks, pamphlet, study guides)	0.604	0.383	0.692
Audio resources (such as cassettes, radio, podcast)	0.627	0.425	0.680
Visual resources (such as pictures, models, real objects, maps, projectors, photographs)	0.742	0.526	0.636
Audio visual resources (such as slides, tapes, filmstrips, television, video)	0.648	0.447	0.669
Electronic interactive (such as computers, calculators, tablets)	0.774	0.557	0.622

Cronbach's alpha =0.709

Results show that all the factor loadings were above the acceptable threshold of 0.4 and ranged from 0.604 to 0.774. Item to total correlations scores ranged from 0.383 to 0.557. Therefore, all the items under learning resources were retained for further analysis since reliability and construct validity was confirmed.

Reliability and Construct Validity of Social Environment Items

School social environment was assessed based on peer relations and teacher-learner interaction. Peer relations had five indicators while teacher-learner interaction had six indicators. The indicators were rated on a five-Likert scale with 1 denoting Always, 2 denoting Often, 3 denoting Sometimes, 4 denoting rarely and 5 indicating Never. The Cronbach Alpha for peer relations was fair at 0.683. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 14.

Table 14

Reliability and Construct Validity of Peer-Relations Statements

How often would your classmates:	Factor Loading	Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
Choose you on their team.	0.509	0.393	0.590
Help you if you were hurt.	0.665	0.484	0.456
Explain something to you if you did not understand.	0.568	0.427	0.531
Help you if something is bothering you.	0.741	0.543	0.675
Tell you to join them when you are alone and share things with them.	0.726	0.379	0.567

Cronbach's alpha =0.683

Results show that all the factor loadings were above the acceptable threshold of 0.4 and ranged from 0.509 to 0.741. Item to total correlations scores ranged from 0.379 to 0.543. Therefore, all the items under peer relations were retained for further analysis since reliability and construct validity was confirmed. Cronbach Alpha for teacher-learner interaction was low at 0.506. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 15.

Table 15*Reliability and Construct Validity of Teacher-Learner Interaction*

Teacher-Learner Interactions Statements	Factor Loading	Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
My teachers are fair when dealing with learners	0.515	0.310	0.652
I feel I can go to my class teacher with the things that are in my mind	0.627	0.401	0.603
Teachers believe that all learners can learn	0.256	-0.137	0.553
Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say	0.666	0.443	0.583
Teachers respect my opinions in the classroom.	0.698	0.416	0.567
Teachers value my contributions in the classroom.	0.713	0.460	0.576
Cronbach's alpha =0.506, 0.663			

Information obtained show that factor loadings ranged from 0.256 to 0.713 thus the indicator with factor loading of 0.256 failed to meet the acceptable threshold of 0.4. Item to total correlations scores ranged from -0.137 to 0.460. This means the indicator with -0.137 failed to meet the required threshold of 0.300 item to total correlation and was not included for analysis. Assessment of the remaining five indicators showed that they met the expected factor loading and item to total correlation and the variables' reliability increased to 0.663 which was perceived as adequate for inclusion in analysis.

Reliability and Construct Validity of Emotional Environment Items

Emotional environment was assessed based on school connectedness and self-awareness. School connectedness had five indicators while self-Awareness had seven indicators. The indicators were rated on a five-Likert scale with 1 denoting Strongly Agree, 2 denoting Agree, 3 Neutral, 4 denoting Disagree and finally 5 indicating Strongly Disagree.. Cronbach Alpha for school connectedness was ~~low~~ at 0.586. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 16.

Table 16*Reliability and Construct Validity of School Connectedness Statements*

School Connectedness Statements	Factor Loading	Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
I feel close to people at school.	-0.409	-0.258	0.769
I feel like I am part of this school	0.710	0.472	0.454
I am happy to be in this school	0.794	0.537	0.415
Teachers treat learners fairly in this school	0.775	0.542	0.418
Learners feel safe in this school	0.757	0.514	0.433

Cronbach's alpha =0.586; 0.769

Information obtained show that factor loadings ranged between -0.409 to 0.794 thus the indicator with factor loading of -0.409 failed to meet the acceptable threshold of 0.4. Item to total correlations scores ranged from -0.258 to 0.542. This means the indicator with -0.258 failed to meet the required threshold of 0.300 item to total correlation and was not included for analysis. Assessment of the remaining four indicators showed that they met the expected factor loading and item to total correlation and the variables' reliability increased to 0.769 which was perceived as adequate for inclusion in analysis. Cronbach Alpha for self-awareness was low at 0.492. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 17.

Table 17

Reliability and Construct Validity of Self-Awareness Statements

Self-Awareness Statements	Factor Loading	Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
I feel welcomed in school each day.	0.790	0.317	0.415
My emotions change depending on where I am in the school.	0.359	0.299	0.428
My behavior changes depending on where I am in the school.	0.052	0.177	0.486
Talking to teachers make me happy	0.771	0.489	0.433
Talking to other learners in the school make me happy	0.742	0.307	0.428
Some things about school stress me	-0.178	0.069	0.537
I know what affects my emotional well-being in school	0.344	0.263	0.441
Cronbach's alpha =0.492, 0.707			

Results show that factor loadings ranged between -0.178 to 0.790 thus the indicator with factor loading of -0.178, 0.059, 0.344 and 0.359 failed to meet the acceptable threshold of 0.4. Item to total correlations scores ranged from 0.069 to 0.489. This means the indicator with 0.069, and 0.177 failed to meet the required threshold of 0.300 item to total correlation and was not included for analysis. Assessment of the remaining five indicators showed that they met the expected factor loading and item to total correlation and the variables' reliability increased to 0.707 which was perceived as adequate for inclusion in analysis.

4.3.5.3 Reliability and Construct Validity of Coping Intervention Items

Coping interventions was measured at three levels including problem focus, avoidance and social support services.

Reliability and Construct Validity of Problem Focus Items

Problem focus had ten indicators each rated on a five-Likert scale with 1 denoting Strongly Agree, 2 denoting Agree, 3 denoting Neutral, 4 denoting Disagree and 5 indicating Strongly Disagree. The Cronbach Alpha for the variable was good at 0.780. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 18.

Table 18

Reliability and Construct Validity of Problem Focus Statements

Problem-Focused Statements	Factor Loading	Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.	0.495	0.363	0.771
I do what must be done one step at a time.	0.589	0.457	0.761
I take additional actions to try to get rid of the problem.	0.589	0.454	0.761
I try to think about how I might best handle the problem.	0.716	0.586	0.745
I concentrate my efforts on doing something about it.	0.623	0.482	0.758
I think about choices before acting	0.544	0.422	0.765
I think about risks of different solutions.	0.570	0.444	0.762
I change behavior that contributes to the problem	0.514	0.388	0.770
I think about possible consequences	0.587	0.450	0.761
I form a plan of action in my mind	0.579	0.447	0.762

Cronbach's alpha =0.780

Results show that all the factor loadings were above the acceptable threshold of 0.4 and ranged from 0.495 to 0.716. Item to total correlations scores ranged from 0.363 to 0.586. Therefore, all the items under problem focus were retained for further analysis since reliability and construct validity was confirmed.

Reliability and Construct Validity of Avoidance Items

Avoidance had ten indicators each rated on a five-Likert scale with 1 denoting Strongly Agree, 2 denoting Agree, 3 denoting Neutral, 4 denoting Disagree and 5

indicating Strongly Disagree. The Cronbach Alpha for the variable was good at 0.815. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 19.

Table 19

Reliability and Construct Validity of Avoidance Statements

Avoidance Statements	Factor Loading	Item-Total Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
I make fun of the situation.	0.660	0.524	0.795
I spend more time than usual alone	0.639	0.516	0.796
I act as if it hasn't happened.	0.706	0.587	0.788
I refuse to believe it has happened.	0.691	0.570	0.790
I laugh about the situation.	0.740	0.621	0.785
I daydream about things other than this.	0.660	0.541	0.794
I sleep more than usual	0.635	0.523	0.796
I do all I could to keep others from knowing how bad things were to me	0.564	0.474	0.801
I try to distract myself from the problem	0.442	0.383	0.830
I wish that people would just leave me alone	0.550	0.428	0.806
Cronbach's alpha =0.815			

Results show that all the factor loadings were above the acceptable threshold of 0.4 and ranged from 0.442 to 0.740. Item to total correlations scores ranged from 0.383 to 0.621. Therefore, all the items under avoidance were retained for further analysis since reliability and construct validity was confirmed.

Reliability and Construct Validity of Social Support Services

Social support services had ten indicators each rated on a five-Likert scale with 1 denoting Strongly Agree, 2 denoting Agree, 3 denoting Neutral, 4 denoting Disagree and 5 indicating Strongly Disagree. The Cronbach Alpha for the variable was good at 0.780. Exploratory factor analysis is shown on the Table 20.

Table 20

Reliability and Construct Validity of Social Support Service Statements

Social Support Services Statements	Factor	Item-Total	Alpha if Item
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	Loading	Correlation	Deleted
I get sympathy from my friends.	0.493	0.362	0.734
I sought reassurance from those who know me best	0.505	0.373	0.733
I discuss my feelings with the guidance and counselling teacher.	0.525	0.373	0.733
I try to get support from my relatives.	0.626	0.438	0.725
There is at least one teacher in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.	0.678	0.470	0.720
There is at least one teacher in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.	0.675	0.465	0.720
I talk to the peer counsellors about how I feel.	0.581	0.452	0.721
I let feelings out with someone	0.416	0.383	0.733
I talk with brother or sister	0.649	0.463	0.721
I Let feelings out with someone	0.410	0.357	0.738
Cronbach's alpha =0.748			

Results show that all the factor loadings were above the acceptable threshold of 0.4 and ranged from 0.410 to 0.678. Item to total correlations scores ranged from 0.357 to 0.470. Therefore, all the items under social support services were retained for further analysis since reliability and construct validity was confirmed.

4.4 School Environment and Psychological Wellbeing

The study was based on four objectives; the relationship between school physical environment and psychological wellbeing among learners in Junior Schools, the relationship between school social environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools, the relationship between school emotional environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools and the influence of coping strategies on the relationship between school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This section presents findings beginning with descriptive findings, hypothesis testing, qualitative findings and ultimately discussion for each. To begin with, the study sought to assess respondents' conception of the psychological wellbeing of junior school learners based on a psychological test administered to the learners. Data obtained was as presented in

Table 21.

Table 21

Psychological Wellbeing of Grade Eight Learners

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
I feel happy about myself	1.8	0.3	1.4	11.7	84.8	100.0

I feel confident about myself	0.9	2.1	5.5	29.7	61.8	100.0
I feel positive about myself	5.5	3.3	6.7	16.7	67.9	100.0
I am good at managing my daily responsibilities	2.1	2.7	7.9	20.4	60.9	100.0
People are friendly to me	1.5	2.1	11.2	33.9	51.3	100.0
Generally, people are welcoming towards me	3.0	5.2	16.4	31.2	44.2	100.0
I have enough choice about how I spend my time	2.1	4.2	8.8	30.6	54.2	100.0
I feel that I learn a lot of things these days	3.3	4.2	6.1	20.0	66.4	100.0
I feel positive about my future	5.5	3.6	7.0	11.5	72.4	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Information obtained show that a significant proportion of the learners indicated that they feel happy about themselves (96.5%), slightly less than this proportion feel confident about themselves (91.5%) and feel positive about themselves (84.6%). Similarly, more than three quarters believed that they are good at managing their daily responsibilities (81.3%), slightly more than this proportion confessed that people are friendly to them (85.2%) and about three quarters felt that generally people are welcoming towards them (75.4%). At the same time, more than three quarters of the sampled grade eight learners believed that they have enough choice about how they spend their time (84.8%), a similar proportion feel that they learn a lot of things these days (86.4%) and that they feel positive about their future (83.9%). Findings imply that a significant proportion of the grade eight learners (85.51%) have a highly positive opinion about their psychological wellbeing. Information obtained from their class teachers were as presented in Table 22.

Table 22

Class Teachers Views on Psychological Wellbeing of Grade Eight Learners

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
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The school environment promotes a sense of self-acceptance among learners	0.0	2.4	2.4	42.9	52.3	100.0
The school environment promotes a sense of self-love among learners.	0.0	4.9	17.1	29.3	48.7	100.0
Learners have the skills to manage stress effectively	2.4	9.8	26.8	46.4	14.6	100.0
Learners have the resources to manage stress effectively	0.0	29.2	19.5	41.5	9.8	100.0
Learners have the skills and resources to manage stress effectively and cope with academic pressures.	0.0	22.0	36.5	22.0	19.5	100.0
The school's environment affects the quality of learners' relationships.	7.3	29.3	12.2	31.7	19.5	100.0
Learners make meaningful decisions about their learning and academic pursuits	0.0	12.2	9.8	46.3	31.7	100.0
School plays a significant role in guiding learners toward a sense of purpose and direction in life.	0.0	12.2	4.9	36.6	46.3	100.0
The school environment supports opportunities for learners' individual growth and development.	0.0	12.2	7.3	31.7	49.8	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Information obtained from class teachers show that almost all the teachers sampled (95.2%) said that their school environment promotes a sense of self-acceptance among learners, more than three quarters (78.0%) believed that the school environment promotes a sense of self-love among learners and less than less than two thirds (61.0%) suggested that learners have the skills to manage stress effectively. Similarly, about a half (51.3%) said that learners in their school have the resources to manage stress effectively, a similar proportion (51.2%) indicated that their school's environment affects the quality of learners' relationships while less than this proportion (41.5%) believed that learners have the skills and resources to manage stress effectively and cope with academic pressures. At the same time, more than three quarters of the sampled teachers (78.0%) indicated that learners make meaningful decisions about their learning and academic pursuits, more than this proportion (82.9%) said that school plays a significant role in guiding learners toward a sense of purpose and direction in life and a similar proportion (81.5%) believed that their school environment supports opportunities for learners' individual growth and development. Findings show that more than two thirds of the sampled grade eight class teachers (68.96%) believed that their school environment was highly suitable for junior school learners.

4.4.1 School Physical Environment and Psychological Wellbeing among Learners in Junior Schools

The first objective sought to investigate the relationship between school physical environment and psychological wellbeing among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This section presents findings beginning with descriptive findings, hypotheses testing and discussions.

4.4.1.1 Descriptive Findings

To achieve the purpose of this objective, grade eight learners were provided with psychometric test items on school facilities and learning resources. Their teachers were also provided with questionnaire items on the school's physical environment. Table 23 presents data obtained from the psychometric test administered to grade eight learners on school facilities and how it could be contributing towards their psychological wellbeing.

Table 23

School Facilities and Psychological Wellbeing

School Facilities Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
I am not satisfied with the condition of school buildings	27.6	22.4	16.7	20.3	13.0	100.0
My school is usually not clean	62.4	14.2	7.0	11.2	5.2	100.0
The classrooms are well equipped	11.2	9.1	17.0	25.5	37.2	100.0
My school has comfortable desks and chairs	14.8	11.8	14.8	17.9	40.7	100.0
My school has security measures (such as CCTV cameras, Security Guards)	35.1	19.4	14.5	15.5	15.5	100.0
My school has safety measures (such as First AID Kits,)	18.5	13.0	12.4	16.7	39.4	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Data obtained show that only about a third (33.3%) of the sampled grade eight learners were not satisfied with the condition of school buildings, less than a quarter (16.4%) indicated that their school is usually not clean and a majority (62.7%) said that their classrooms are well equipped. At the same time, more than half of the learners (58.6%) were categorical that their school has comfortable desks and chairs, slightly less than this proportion (56.1%) insisted that their school has safety measures (such as First AID Kits,) while less than a third (31.0%) indicated that their school has security measures (such as CCTV cameras, Security Guards). Findings show that less than a half of the sampled grade eight learners (43.02%) confirmed that school

facilities as an attribute of the school's physical environment adequately provided for their psychological needs. Data obtained from learners as regards learning resources were as presented in Table 24.

Table 24

Learning Resources and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners

My teachers often teach using;	N	R	S	O	A	Total
Printed resources (such as textbooks, pamphlet, study guides)	6.4	3.6	10.3	7.9	71.8	100.0
Audio resources (such as cassettes, radio, podcast)	40.0	10.6	17.6	15.8	16.1	100.0
Visual resources (such as pictures, models, real objects, maps, projectors, photographs)	12.7	7.3	27.6	13.9	38.5	100.0
Audio visual resources (such as slides, tapes, filmstrips, television, video)	37.0	17.6	19.4	11.5	14.5	100.0
Electronic interactive (such as computers, calculators, tablets)	11.2	7.9	15.1	8.8	57.0	100.0

Results obtained show that more than three quarters of the grade eight learners (81.7%) confirmed that their teacher often or always teach using printed resources such as textbooks, pamphlet and study guides, less than a third (31.9%) use audio resources such as cassettes, radio and podcast while more than a half (52.4%) said they use visual resources such as pictures, models, real objects, maps, projectors and photographs often or always. Findings also showed that only a quarter of the learners (26.0%) indicated their teacher using audio- visual resources such as slides, tapes, filmstrips, television, and video while more than a half (65.8%) said their teacher use electronic interactive such as computers, calculator tablets. Findings therefore show that slightly more than a half (51.56%) of the sampled grade eight learners believed that their teachers effectively utilized learning resources which could have a positive influence on their psychological wellbeing. Data obtained from their class teachers were as presented in Table 25.

Table 25*Physical Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Learners (Teachers)*

In our school,	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
School facilities influence the psychological wellbeing of learners	0.0	4.9	4.9	51.2	39.0	100.0
Availability of school facilities positively affects learners learning experience.	2.4	0.0	4.9	48.8	43.9	100.0
Access to adequate learning resources positively influences learner academic achievement and understanding of subjects	2.4	7.3	4.9	34.2	51.2	100.0
Equitable distribution of learning resources among learners promotes a fair and inclusive learning environment	2.4	7.3	9.8	34.2	46.3	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Information obtained from class teachers show that a significant majority believe that school facilities influence the psychological wellbeing of learners (90.2%) and that availability of school facilities positively affects learners learning experience (92.7%). Similarly, most of the class teacher (85.4%) indicated that access to adequate learning resources positively influences learner academic achievement and understanding of subjects and that equitable distribution of learning resources among learners promotes a fair and inclusive learning environment (80.5%). Results from grade eight class teachers therefore confirmed the belief of a significant majority (87.2%) that physical environment has a contribution on learners' psychological wellbeing.

4.4.1.2 Hypothesis Testing

. The first objective sought investigate the relationship between school physical environment and psychological wellbeing among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The first hypothesis, **H₀₁** formulated for this purpose sought to establish whether there existed a significant relationship between school physical environment and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The study thus tested the relationship between school physical environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Since normality test showed that data obtained from all study variables were non-normal, logistic regression was used for the test. Table 26 and 27 presents the findings.

Table 26

Relationship between Physical Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners (Model Summary)

Step	-2log likelihood	Cox & Snell R ²	Nagelkerke R ²	χ^2	df	Sig.
1	200.716 ^a	0.215	0.254	1.287	1	0.382

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Independent variable in the model was school physical environment. The model was significant $\chi^2 (1) = 141.469$, $p < 0.001$ and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test confirmed model fit, $\chi^2 (1) = 1.287$, $p = 0.382$. Cox & Snell R square predicted a variance of 21.5% while Nagelkerke R square predicted 25.4% variation in psychological wellbeing of the junior school learners explained by the model. The model with independent variable explained 90.2% of psychological wellbeing, an improvement from the initial 85.1% initially predicted. Table 28 presents information on variables in the equation.

Table 27

Relationship between Physical Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners (Regression Coefficient)

		B	SE	Wald χ^2	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1	Physical Environment	1.130	0.381	8.787	1	0.003	3.095
	Constant	-3.726	0.579	41.454	1	0.000	0.024

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Physical Environment.

Regression analysis illustrated that school physical environment positively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners, Wald $\chi^2 (1) = 8.787$, $p = 0.003$, Exp (B) = 3.095. Findings mean that school physical environment is positively and significantly related with psychological wellbeing of junior school learners implying that when school physical environment is improved, psychological wellbeing of junior school learners improves. Therefore, the first hypothesis which stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between school physical environment and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya was rejected.

4.4.1.3 Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data was sought from SQASO on the contribution of school physical environment to psychological wellbeing of junior school learners within their areas of jurisdictions. To begin with, as regards the quality and adequacy of the school's facilities interviewees observed that;

P1: Quality is good but not adequate for all learners as some important ones like laboratory are not available.

P2: Facilities are inadequate because laboratories and workshops are yet to be built. In most schools, buildings are old and need renovation especially the semi-permanent buildings.

P4: In most public schools the facilities available such as class rooms are not only of poor quality but are also inadequate. The classrooms are mostly incomplete with uncemented floors.

Findings show that generally, public schools in Tharaka Nithi domiciling junior school have poor quality physical facilities which in some cases are also inadequate. According to the interviewees, most schools lack laboratories and workshops considered significant for implementation of the curriculum. In some schools, classrooms were said to be either old and dilapidated or incomplete.

4.4.1.4 Discussions on Findings of the Relationship

The first objective sought to investigate the relationship between school physical environment and psychological wellbeing among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. To achieve this, quantitative data was sought from sampled grade eight learners from the study area, their class teachers through questionnaires and qualitative data from sub-county quality assurance and standard officers through interview. Information was sought on adequacy of school facilities and learning resources. Data obtained illustrated that less than a half of the sampled grade eight learners (43.02%) felt that school facilities as an attribute of the school's physical environment adequately provided for their psychological needs implying that a majority of the sampled schools were inadequately equipped with physical facilities to adequately provide for the needs of the learners. Muriuki (2022) conducted a study in Nakuru County and pointed out that the government rushed CBC into schools without first addressing issues such as understaffing, lack of teaching and learning

materials, infrastructure; classrooms and laboratories. He further pointed out that there was an unpleasant teaching and learning atmosphere and administration did not first develop efficient communication and consultation mechanisms. These have had a severe influence especially on the pioneer Junior School learners. These challenges directly affect the school environment, which in turn has an impact on the psychological wellbeing of learners.

Information on adequacy of learning resources and their effective use showed that slightly more than a half (51.56%) of the sampled grade eight learners believed that their teachers effectively utilized available learning resources which could have a positive influence on their psychological wellbeing. This means that even though a slight majority of the respondents reported effective use of learning resources, a significant proportion were experiencing ineffective use of available resources which could impact negatively on their psychological wellbeing. Spenser et al (2020) in Australia found out that school infrastructure, particularly the availability of outdoor recreational spaces, played a crucial role in promoting students' psychological well-being. Their study indicated that access to well-maintained playgrounds and sports facilities helped reduce stress and improve overall mental health among learners. They advocated for policies that prioritize the development and maintenance of school infrastructures to support student well-being.

Information from class teachers as regards the contributions of a school's physical environment on learners' psychological wellbeing confirmed the belief of a significant majority (87.2%) that physical environment has a contribution on learners' psychological wellbeing. This means that a significant majority of the sampled class teachers believed that conducive physical environment promotes positive psychosocial wellbeing with the converse also being true. Krutkowski and Rodgers (2024) in a study in Japan found that schools with modern, well-maintained infrastructures significantly contributed to the overall psychological well-being of learners. The researchers further pointed out that students in these environments exhibited lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of academic performance compared to their peers in less favorable conditions.

Inferential analysis based on regression analysis illustrated that school physical environment positively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners, $Wald\chi^2(1) = 8.787$, $p = 0.003$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 3.095$. Findings mean that school physical environment is positively and significantly related with psychological wellbeing of junior school learners implying that when school physical environment is improved, psychological wellbeing of junior school learners improves. Buenor (2023) in a study in Germany emphasized the importance of school infrastructure on learner well-being. Their research showed that learners attending schools with high-quality facilities reported higher satisfaction levels and a greater sense of security, which positively impacted their mental health and academic outcomes. The researchers also argued that the physical environment of a school is a critical determinant of learners' overall happiness and motivation to engage in their studies. Ngwenya et al (2021) also support the positive impact of school infrastructure on learner well-being. Their study demonstrated that learners in schools with adequate facilities experienced lower levels of stress and anxiety, which in turn contributed to better academic performance and overall well-being. They emphasized the need for government intervention to improve school infrastructures in underserved areas.

Qualitative analysis showed that generally, public schools in Tharaka Nithi domiciling junior school have poor quality physical facilities which in some cases are also inadequate. According to the interviewees, most schools lacked laboratories and workshops considered significant for implementation of the curriculum. In some schools, classrooms were said to be either old and dilapidated or incomplete. Findings therefore imply the poor physical facilities and inadequate teaching and learning resources could be impacting negatively on learners' psychological wellbeing. Ene-Obong et al. (2012) in their study observed that adequate classroom space, well-stocked libraries, fully equipped laboratories, and accessible recreational areas improve learners' psychological well-being. On the contrary, the study highlighted that inadequate maintenance of existing facilities and resources can lead to feelings of frustration and hinder academic progress, ultimately affecting learners' emotional and mental states negatively.

Findings therefore showed that a majority of the junior schools lack adequate facilities and that those resources available were not adequately being used which could be having a negative effect on the junior school learner's psychological wellbeing. It was

also generally illustrated that school physical environment is significantly related with learners' psychological wellbeing. Previously, studies have shown that a supportive school climate not only fosters active learner participation but also bolsters academic achievement, underscoring the paramount significance of the learning environment. Conversely, an unsupportive or hostile environment can impede learners' psychological health and hinder their academic progress (Baruah, 2022). Phuntsho and Dendup (2020) from Bhutan in Asia carried out research on the relationship between school climate, learner engagement and academic achievement in higher secondary school. Their study emphasizes the significance of a nurturing school climate in fostering active learner engagement and enhancing academic achievement. Their findings were collaborated by López et al (2021) from the US and Bae and Yoon (2021) from Vietnam.

4.4.2 Social Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners

The second objective sought to determine the relationship between school social environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This section presents findings beginning with descriptive findings, hypotheses testing and discussions.

4.4.2.1 Descriptive Findings

To achieve the purpose of this objective, grade eight learners were provided with psychometric test items on peer relations and teacher-learner interactions. Their teachers were also provided with questionnaire items on social environment. Table 28 presents data obtained from the psychometric test administered to grade eight learners on peer relations and how it could be contributing towards their psychological wellbeing.

Table 28

Peer Relations and Psychological Wellbeing

How often would your classmates:	N	R	S	O	A	Total
Choose you on their team.	41.8	20.3	9.7	11.2	17.0	100.0
Help you if you were hurt.	47.3	25.5	8.8	10.3	8.2	100.0
Explain something to you if you did not understand.	52.4	19.7	10.9	7.9	9.1	100.0
Help you if something is bothering you.	11.5	10.0	11.8	28.8	37.9	100.0
Tell you to join them when you are alone and share things with them.	12.1	4.8	14.8	23.3	44.8	100.0

Key; N-Never, R-Rarely, S-Sometimes, O-Often, A-Always

Information obtained show that a much less proportion of sampled grade eight learners (28.2%) indicated that their classmates would often or always choose them on their team, less than a quarter (18.5%) would be helped by classmates if you were hurt and would be explained for something if they did not understand (17.0%) often or always. However, a majority indicated that they could be helped if something was bothering them often or always (66.7%) and told to join them when alone and share things with them (68.1%) often or always. Findings therefore indicated that less than a half of the sampled grade eight learners (39.7%) confirmed having a healthy relationship with their peers. Data obtained as regards teacher-learner interaction was as presented in Table 29.

Table 29
Teacher-Learner Interactions and Psychological Wellbeing

Statements	N	R	S	O	A	Total
My teachers are fair when dealing with learners	8.5	15.2	10.6	17.9	47.9	100.0
I feel I can go to my class teacher with the things that are in my mind	6.1	9.7	18.5	32.4	33.3	100.0
Teachers believe that all learners can learn	23.3	40.0	11.2	11.2	14.2	100.0
Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say	7.9	6.7	15.2	32.7	37.6	100.0
Teachers respect my opinions in the classroom.	8.6	4.2	14.8	34.2	38.2	100.0
Teachers value my contributions in the classroom.	4.8	9.2	13.3	30.3	42.4	100.0

Key; N-Never, R-Rarely, S-Sometimes, O-Often, A-Always

Data obtained show that about two thirds of the sampled grade eight learners (65.8%) acknowledged that their teachers are fair when dealing with learners, a similar proportion indicated that they felt they could go to their class teacher with the things that are in their mind (65.7%) though only a quarter confirmed that their teachers believe that all learners can learn (25.4%) often or always. At the same, a majority of the sampled learners (70.3%) said that most of their teachers really listen to what they have to say often or always, slightly more than this proportion believed that their teachers respect their opinions in the classroom (72.4%) and that teachers value their contributions in the classroom (72.7%) often or always. Findings imply that a majority of the sampled grade eight learners (62.05%) confirmed having a healthy

teacher-learner interaction significant for their psychological wellbeing. Findings from grade eight class teachers were as presented in Table 30.

Table 30

Social Interactions and psychological wellbeing of Learners

In our school,	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Peer relationships affect the psychological wellbeing of learners	7.3	7.3	2.4	53.7	29.3	100.0
Close friendships and social connections with peers is important for learners' social and emotional development.	0.0	4.9	9.8	36.6	48.7	100.0
Teachers have a sense of collective responsibility for learners' wellbeing	0.0	2.4	2.4	48.8	46.4	100.0
Teachers always show respect towards learners	0.0	4.9	14.6	22.0	58.5	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Information obtained from grade eight class teachers show that more than three quarters of them (83.0%) believe that peer relationships affect the psychological wellbeing of learners and close friendships and social connections with peers is important for learners' social and emotional development (85.3%). Similarly, a majority (95.2%) confirmed that teachers have a sense of collective responsibility for learners' wellbeing and teachers always show respect towards learners (80.5%). Findings show that a significant majority of the sampled grade eight class teachers (86.0%) confirmed that social interaction among learners is significant for their psychological wellbeing.

4.4.2.2 Hypothesis Testing

The study thus proceeded to assess the inferential relationship between social environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The second objective sought determine the relationship between school social environment and Psychological wellbeing among Junior School learners. The second hypothesis, **H₀₂** formulated for this purpose sought to establish whether there existed a significant relationship between school social environment and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The study thus tested the relationship between elements of social environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Since normality

test showed that data obtained from study variables were non-normal, logistic regression was used for the test. Table 31 and 32 presents the findings.

Table 31

Relationship between Social Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners (Model Summary)

Step	-2log likelihood	Cox & Snell R ²	Nagelkerke R ²	χ^2	df	Sig.
1	208.057 ^a	0.133	0.179	1.062	1	.303

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Independent variable in the model was school social environment. The model was significant $\chi^2 (1) = 141.469$, $p < 0.001$ and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test confirmed model fit, $\chi^2 (1) = 1.062$, $p = 0.303$. Cox & Snell R square predicted a variance of 13.3% while Nagelkerke R square predicted 17.9% variation in psychological wellbeing of the junior school learners explained by the model. The model with independent variable explained 90.2% of psychological wellbeing, an improvement from the initial 85.1% initially predicted. Table 33 presents information on variables in the equation.

Table 32

Relationship between Social Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners (Regression Coefficient)

		B	SE	Wald χ^2	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1	Social Environment	-0.384	0.374	5.052	1	0.025	3.468
	Constant	2.760	.577	22.884	1	0.000	0.063

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Social Environment.

Regression analysis illustrated that social environment negatively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners, Wald $\chi^2 (1) = 5.052$, $p = 0.025$, Exp (B) = 3.463. Findings mean that social environment is negatively significantly related to psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Therefore, the second hypothesis which stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between social environment and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya was rejected.

4.4.2.3 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data was also sought from SQASO on the contribution of social environment to psychological wellbeing of junior school learners within their areas of jurisdictions. To begin with, as regards strategies employed by the county education department to promote positive peer relationship among learners, interviewees observed that;

P1: Encouraging peer teaching, strengthening guidance and counselling among peers, encouraging social interaction during co-curricular activities and emphasizing teaching of physical education lessons.

P3: Emphasize teaching of life skill lessons and encouraging head teachers to promote co-curricular activities such as games, sports and music among others.

P5: Formation of peer counselling clubs, organizing of career days for junior school learners and facilitating opportunities for peer feedback and reflection.

Findings show that according to the interviewees, positive peer relationships among junior school learners is being fostered through formation of peer counselling clubs, encouraging social interaction during co-curricular activities such as games, sports and music among others. The study also sought to establish strategies in place to nurture teacher-learner relationships. In response, interviewees observed that:

P2: Schools are encouraged to establish teacher-learner welfare clubs, teacher-learner academic families, operational guidance and counselling departments and open school sports days for teachers and learners.

P4: Encouraging dialogue sessions between teachers and learners on matters of concern and involving teachers and learners in collaborative decision making.

Findings showed that by schools establishing teacher-learner welfare clubs, teacher-learner academic families, operational guidance and counselling departments and open school sports days for teachers and learners they provide opportunities for teacher learner interactions. Schools can also support the interactions by encouraging dialogue sessions between teachers and learners on matters of concern and involving teachers and learners in collaborative decision making. Ultimately, social interactions was indicated to contribute to learners' psychological wellbeing and academic success in that:

P1: When learners are able to appreciate their social environment in comparison to others, they are motivated and ultimately enhances their efforts in academics.

P3: When interactions between learners and learners as well as learners and teachers are both positive, psychological wellbeing is influenced positively which in turn promotes academics.

Findings therefore confirm that a positive social interaction between learners themselves and learners and their teachers catalyze the social environment which not only promotes junior school psychological wellbeing but also their academic wellbeing.

4.4.2.4 Discussions on Findings of the Relationship

The second objective sought to determine the relationship between school social environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. To achieve this, quantitative data was sought from sampled grade eight learners from the study area, their class teachers through questionnaires and qualitative data from sub-county quality assurance and standard officers through interview. Information was sought on peer relations and teacher-learner interaction. A study conducted in America by Roach (2018) emphasizes the positive correlation between strong peer relationships and learners' emotional and psychological health. Roach's findings indicate that when learners experience a sense of belonging and acceptance among their peers, they tend to have better mental health outcomes. Conversely, the negative aspects of peer relationships, such as peer exclusion and bullying, have been demonstrated to harm learners' psychological health. Roach points out that the school environment should actively foster positive peer interactions through structured social activities and peer support programs to enhance learners' well-being.

Information on teacher-learner relations showed that a majority of the sampled grade eight learners (62.05%) confirmed having a healthy teacher-learner interaction significant for their psychological wellbeing. A study conducted in Iceland by Egilson and Traustadottir (2020) emphasized that positive teacher-learner relationships are associated with improved academic performance, higher self-esteem, and enhanced

overall psychological health. They argue that these relationships foster a sense of security and trust, which are essential for learners' emotional development. They advocate for teacher training programs that emphasize the importance of building strong, supportive relationships with learners. Similarly, Coronado et al. (2021) in California found that the teacher-learner relationship played a key role in supporting social-emotional learning, encouraging prosocial behaviors, and creating more engaged and motivated learning opportunities for the learners. Their study suggests that teachers who actively engage with their learners and provide consistent support contribute to a positive school climate, enhancing learners' overall wellbeing. The researchers therefore recommend schools to implement professional development programs that help teachers develop skills in social-emotional learning and learner engagement.

Information from class teachers as regards the relationship between social environment and learners' psychological wellbeing showed that a significant majority of the sampled grade eight class teachers (86.0%) confirmed that social interaction among learners is significant for their psychological wellbeing. A study by Fourie and de Klerk (2024) in South Africa emphasize the importance of a supportive school climate in fostering learners' engagement and enhancing educational achievement. In their paper on Self-esteem and locus of control as predictors of psychological wellbeing of senior secondary school adolescents in Nigeria, Enwere and Mbakwe (2021) mention that there is a growing recognition of the need to address social aspects within educational settings to promote learners' holistic development. Teachers play a critical role in creating a conducive learning environment through positive interactions and effective pedagogical approaches. Additionally, ensuring the psychological safety of learners within the school environment is identified as a key priority for promoting their well-being and academic success.

Inferential analysis based on regression analysis illustrated that social environment negatively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of Junior School learners, $Wald\chi^2(1) = 5.052$, $p = 0.025$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 3.463$. Findings mean that social environment is negatively and significantly related to psychological wellbeing of Juniors School learners. Previously studies have shown that perceptions of the social

environment significantly influence individuals' psychological well-being across diverse contexts (Väisänen et al., 2017), and learners' experiences within the school environment crucially shape their engagement with the educational process (Bae & Yoon, 2021). A supportive school climate not only fosters active learner participation but also bolsters academic achievement, underscoring the paramount significance of the learning environment. Conversely, an unsupportive or hostile environment can impede learners' psychological health and hinder their academic progress (Baruah, 2022). Thus, studying school environment is relevant for comprehending the intricate interplay between educational settings and learners' psychological well-being, social dynamics, and academic success.

Qualitative analysis showed that positive peer relationships among Junior School learners is being fostered through formation of peer counselling clubs, encouraging social interaction during co-curricular activities such as games, sports and music among others. It was also illustrated that by schools establishing teacher-learner welfare clubs, teacher-learner academic families, operational guidance and counselling departments and open school sports days for teachers and learners they provide opportunities for teacher learner interactions. Schools can also support the interactions by encouraging dialogue sessions between teachers and learners on matters of concern and involving teachers and learners in collaborative decision making. Findings therefore confirm that a positive social interaction between learners themselves and learners and their teachers catalyze the social environment which not only promotes junior school psychological wellbeing but also their academic wellbeing. A study carried out by Hinze (2023) in the United Kingdom's (UK) Junior Secondary schools evidenced that better learner-rated school environment, at the learner and school level was associated with lower risk of depression, fewer social-emotional-behavioral difficulties and higher wellbeing in young people. This research demonstrates that positive relationships are essential to promote wellbeing and protect against the onset of mental health problems developing in learners. In the UK where the topic of psychological wellbeing has been widely researched on, results indicate that mental health problems represent the largest single cause of disability within the UK (World Health Organization, 2022). Positive relationships are essential for young people's psychological wellbeing at school and are essential to any whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Findings therefore showed that the social environment in a significant proportion of the junior schools are inadequate which could be having a negative effect on the junior school learner's psychological wellbeing. It was also generally illustrated that social environment is significantly related with learners' psychological wellbeing implying that poor social environment influencing the psychological wellbeing of the junior school learners negatively and vice versa. Phuntsho and Dendup (2020) from Bhutan in Asia carried out research on the relationship between school climate, learner engagement and academic achievement in higher secondary school. Their study emphasizes the significance of a nurturing school climate in fostering active learner engagement and enhancing academic achievement. Their findings were collaborated by López et al., (2021) from the US and Bae and Yoon (2021) from Vietnam. However, while physical infrastructure and teaching methodologies are crucial aspects, more attention needs to be directed towards understanding the social dynamics within educational settings (Väisänen et al., 2017). Positive peer interactions and supportive teacher-learner relationships are essential for promoting a conducive learning environment and facilitating educational success (Maneeza, 2019). Moreover, psychological safety within the educational environment is recognized as a national priority, as it significantly influences learners' holistic development and societal well-being.

4.4.3 Emotional Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners

The third objective sought to examine the relationship between school emotional environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This section presents findings beginning with descriptive findings, hypotheses testing and discussions.

4.4.3.1 Descriptive Findings

To achieve the purpose of this objective, grade eight learners were provided with psychometric test items on school connectedness and self-awareness. Their teachers were also provided with questionnaire items on the emotional environment. Table 33 presents data obtained from the psychometric test administered to grade eight learners

on school connectedness and how it could be contributing towards their psychological wellbeing.

Table 33

School Connectedness and Psychological Wellbeing

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
I feel close to people at school.	3.9	8.2	16.1	27.6	44.2	100.0
I feel like I am part of this school	41.2	16.1	14.8	16.1	11.8	100.0
I am happy to be in this school	47.0	19.4	13.0	9.7	10.9	100.0
Teachers treat learners fairly in this school	39.7	21.8	17.6	12.1	8.8	100.0
Learners feel safe in this school	48.5	18.2	14.5	9.7	9.1	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Data obtained from grade eight learners show that more than two thirds (71.8%) indicated feeling close to people at school, more than a quarter (27.9%) and less than a quarter (20.6%) were happy to be in their school. At the same time, less than a quarter of the sampled grade eight learner (20.9%) acknowledged that teachers in their school treat learners fairly and very few (18.8%) believed that learners feel safe in their school. Findings mean that only about a third of the sampled grade eight learners (32.0%) indicated feeling positive about school connectedness. Results from the learners on self-awareness were as presented in Table 34.

Table 34

Self-Awareness and Psychological Wellbeing

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
I feel welcomed in school each day.	8.8	7.0	8.8	23.3	52.1	100.0
My emotions change depending on where I am in the school.	7.9	7.0	27.9	33.3	23.9	100.0
My behavior changes depending on where I am in the school.	21.8	11.8	16.7	23.6	26.1	100.0
Talking to teachers make me happy	5.2	5.2	12.4	30.6	46.7	100.0
Talking to other learners in the school make me happy	3.9	4.8	14.2	28.5	48.5	100.0
Some things about school stress me	21.8	12.1	19.1	24.2	22.7	100.0
I know what affects my emotional well-being in school	9.1	10.6	26.1	27.3	27.0	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Results obtained show that about three quarters of the sampled grade eight learners (75.4%) felt welcomed in school each day, more than a half (57.2%) said their emotions change depending on where they are in the school while slightly less than this proportion (49.7%) believed that their behavior changes depending on where they are in the school. Similarly, more than three quarters (77.3%) indicated that talking to teachers make them happy as well as talking to other learners in the school (77.0%), more than a half (54.3%) know what affects their emotional well-being in school while less than half (46.9%) confessed that some things about school stress them. Findings showed that a majority of the sampled grade eight learners (62.54%) had high levels of self-awareness. Their grade eight class teachers' conception of emotional environment to junior school learners' psychological wellbeing was as summarized in table 35.

Table 35

Emotional Environment and psychological Wellbeing of Learners

In our school,	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
The emotional environment affects psychological wellbeing of learners	0.0	4.9	7.3	51.2	36.6	100.0
Adults care about learners learning and as individuals	0.0	4.9	9.8	61.0	24.4	100.0
Peers care about learners learning and as individuals	0.0	9.8	9.8	58.4	22.0	100.0
Learners know what affects their emotional wellbeing in school	0.0	9.8	22.0	43.9	24.4	100.0
Teacher's emotional behaviour affects the psychological wellbeing of learners.	4.9	2.4	22.0	39.0	31.7	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Data obtained show that a significant majority of the sampled class teachers (87.8%) maintained that the emotional environment affects psychological wellbeing of learners, that adults care about learners learning and as individuals (84.4%) and that peers care about learners learning and as individuals (80.4%). At the same time, a majority of the teachers (68.3%) held that learners know what affects their emotional wellbeing in school and that Teacher's emotional behaviour affects the psychological wellbeing of learners (70.7%). Findings show that more than three quarter of the sampled grade three teachers (78.32%) confirmed that emotional environment play an important role in determining learners' psychological wellbeing.

4.4.3.2 Hypothesis Testing

The third objective sought examine the relationship between school emotional environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The third hypothesis, **H₀₃** formulated for this purpose sought to establish whether there existed a significant relationship between emotional environment and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The study thus tested the relationship between elements of emotional environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Since normality test showed that data obtained from all study variables were non-normal, logistic regression was used for the test. Table 36 and 37 presents the findings.

Table 36

Relationship between Emotional Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners (Model Summary)

Step	-2log likelihood	Cox & Snell R ²	Nagelkerke R ²	χ^2	df	Sig.
1	207.685 ^a	0.153	0.214	1.213	1	0.382

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Independent variable in the model was emotional environment. The model was significant $\chi^2 (1) = 141.469$, $p < 0.001$ and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test confirmed model fit, $\chi^2 (1) = 1.213$, $p = 0.382$. Cox & Snell R square predicted a variance of 15.3% while Nagelkerke R square predicted 21.4% variation in psychological wellbeing of the junior school learners explained by the model. The model with independent variable explained 90.2% of psychological wellbeing, an improvement from the initial 85.1% initially predicted. Table 37 presents information on variables in the equation.

Table 37

Relationship between Emotional Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners (Regression Coefficient)

	B	SE	Wald χ^2	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step Social	-0.465	0.399	3.355	1	0.044	2.592

1	Environment						
	Constant	2.974	0.696	18.285	1	0.000	0.051

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Emotional Environment.

Regression analysis illustrated that emotional environment negatively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners, Wald χ^2 (1) = 3.355, $p=0.044$, Exp (B) = 2.592. Findings mean that emotional environment is negatively and significantly related with psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Therefore, the third hypothesis which stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between emotional environment and psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya was rejected.

4.4.3.3 Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data was sought from SQASO on the contribution of emotional environment to psychological wellbeing of junior school learners within their areas of jurisdictions. To begin with, as regards how the County Quality Assurance and Standards department support school connectedness for the learners in the County:

P1: *Assessment of implementation of curricular and co-curricular activities as well as in-service training/retooling of teachers.*

P2: *By providing opportunities for professional growth of teachers to help them meet the diverse emotional needs of learners through mentorship coaching and support during lesson observation, carrying out curriculum audit and conducting lesson study in schools.*

P5: *School based teacher support, mentorship coaching and support during lessons observation, curriculum audit and conducting insets. Other activities include conducting symposiums such as science and engineering fair, standard assessment in schools.*

The study established that the quality assurance officers provide school-based teacher support, mentorship coaching and support during lessons observation, curriculum audit and conducting insets. These activities provide opportunities for professional growth of teachers to help them meet the diverse emotional needs of learners. By providing for the emotional needs of teachers, they enhance the psychological wellbeing of learners in that:

P2: *Teachers experiencing work related stress may project it to the learner's welfare and academic achievement. Emotional wellbeing to teachers will*

ultimately influence their level of preparation and delivery and will also influence supervision of learners work and assessment and ultimately influence learning outcomes.

P3: *When teachers have positive emotions, they teach and guide learners well. Teachers with negative emotions may project in form of anger or arrogance to learners.*

P5: *Emotional wellbeing of teachers will ultimately influence his level of preparation and will ultimately influence delivery of lesson. It will also influence supervision of learners work and assessment and ultimately influence learning outcomes.*

Findings indicate that emotional wellbeing of teachers ultimately influences his/her level of preparation and ultimately delivery of lesson. It will also influence supervision of learners work and assessment and ultimately influence learning outcomes. According to interviewees, teachers experiencing work related stress may project it to the learner's welfare and academic achievement. When teachers have positive emotions, they teach and guide learners well. Teachers with negative emotions may project in form of anger or arrogance to learners. The study thus sought to establish initiatives or guidelines instituted to improve emotional wellbeing among learners and teachers. In response, interviewees observed that:

P1: *Adopting health physical habits, ensuring that classroom climate is conducive for learners and providing psychosocial support. Other strategies include identification of learners and teachers with emotional disorders. Occasionally inviting counselors to guide on topical issues of life such as sexuality and pertinent and contemporary issues and emphasizing the teaching of life skills as a lesson of study.*

P4: *Encouraging teachers to have emotional intelligence when angered by learners. Encouraging teachers and parents to be close to learners and discussing issues affecting them freely.*

The study thus established in order to ensure sound emotional environment for the wellbeing of teachers and learners, schools should ensure that classroom climate is conducive for learners and providing psychosocial support. Other strategies include identification of learners and teachers with emotional disorders. Occasionally inviting counselors to guide on topical issues of life such as sexuality and pertinent and contemporary issues and emphasizing the teaching of life skills as a lesson of study.

4.4.3.4 Discussions on Findings of the Relationship

The third objective sought to examine the relationship between school emotional environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. To achieve this, quantitative data was sought from sampled grade eight learners from the study area, their class teachers through questionnaires and qualitative data from sub-county quality assurance and standard officers through interview. Information was sought on school connectedness and self-awareness. Findings on school connectedness showed that only about a third of the sampled grade eight learners (32.0%) indicated feeling positive about school connectedness implying a lack of connectedness and a sense of belonging by a significant proportion of learners. Previous research indicates that the quality of the school environment, including the emotional support provided by teachers and peers, significantly impacts learners' psychological well-being (Liu et al, 2023). The sense of belonging and connectedness within the school setting fosters resilience and enhances emotional stability, which are crucial for overall mental health. For instance, Lero (2023) emphasizes that emotionally supportive school environments are fundamental in nurturing learners' psychological well-being, ultimately influencing their academic performance and social behavior.

Information on self-awareness showed that a majority of the sampled grade eight learners (62.54%) had high levels of self-awareness. This means that a significant proportion of sampled grade eight learners have high levels of self-awareness which is critical for their wellbeing. Martinez et al (2019) emphasizes that self-awareness enables learners to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and understand that their behavior is influenced by their thoughts. Maharani's research (2016) highlights the importance of self-awareness in fostering discipline in schools, a notion supported by Sudarmono (2017), who argues that self-awareness is essential for effective learning. Similarly, Susilowati (2015) suggests that self-awareness not only contributes to personal and social development but also to psychological well-being. Collectively, these studies underscore the necessity of self-awareness among learners, as its absence may lead to actions or behaviors that deviate from the intended goals and expectations of learning activities.

Information from class teachers as regards their conception of emotional environment on junior school learners' psychological wellbeing show that more than three quarter of the sampled grade three teachers (78.32%) confirmed that emotional environment plays an important role in determining learners' psychological wellbeing. American Psychological Association (2023) emphasizes the importance of emotionally supportive school environments in fostering learners' psychological well-being, highlighting how emotional engagement directly influences academic performance (Liu et al., 2023). Studies in Europe echo these findings, with research indicating that psychological capital, including emotional well-being, is crucial for academic success and overall life satisfaction.

Inferential analysis based on regression analysis illustrated that that emotional environment negatively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners, $Wald\chi^2(1) = 3.355$, $p = 0.044$, $Exp(B) = 2.592$. Findings mean that emotional environment is negatively and significantly related with psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Zechner, Wiesner, and Woodcock (2023) conducted a study in Austria that examined interventions aimed at enhancing peer connectedness through social-emotional learning in junior secondary school learners. The study revealed statistically significant improvements in social skills, peer connectivity, and happiness, although a slight decrease in classroom climate was noted. These findings suggest that while social-emotional abilities positively impact connectedness and happiness, the implementation of such programs requires careful consideration to maintain a positive classroom environment.

Qualitative analysis showed that in order to ensure sound emotional environment for the wellbeing of teachers and learners, schools should ensure that classroom climate is conducive for learners and providing psychosocial support. Other strategies include identification of learners and teachers with emotional disorders. Occasionally inviting counselors to guide on topical issues of life such as sexuality and pertinent and contemporary issues and emphasizing the teaching of life skills as a lesson of study. Rosand and Johansen (2024) did a study in Norway, where they investigated the relationship between the school environment and emotional difficulties in both male and female learners. The results indicated that girls reported a higher prevalence of emotional difficulties in comparison to boys. Emotional difficulties were seen to differ

among classes because of factors such as the composition of the class (such as the ratio of boys to girls) and the overall setting of the class. Relevant contextual aspects that influence emotional disorders include the support from peers and teachers, as well as the possibility for emotional issues to propagate within a class. Significantly, the correlations between emotional difficulties and assistance from peers, educators, and parents were more evident in girls than boys. The study highlights the significance of the classroom setting and promotes the development of strong connections between teenagers and teachers. It also emphasizes the need to treat emotional issues among adolescents to enhance their emotional well-being.

4.4.4 School Environment, Coping Interventions and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners

The fourth objective sought to establish the influence of coping strategies on the relationship between school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This section presents findings beginning with descriptive findings, hypotheses testing and discussions.

4.4.4.1 Descriptive Findings

To achieve the purpose of this objective, grade eight learners were provided with psychometric test items on three coping strategies including problem focused, avoidance and social support services. Their teachers were also provided with questionnaire items on the same strategies. Table 38 presents data obtained from grade eight learners on problem focused.

Table 38

Problem-Focused and Psychological Wellbeing (Learners)

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.	3.3	1.5	9.7	45.2	40.3	100.0
I do what must be done one step at a time.	2.7	2.4	13.0	37.6	44.2	100.0
I take additional actions to try to get rid of the problem.	5.5	5.2	14.2	33.3	41.8	100.0
I try to think about how I might best handle the problem.	2.1	4.5	12.4	31.2	49.7	100.0
I concentrate my efforts on doing something about it.	2.7	3.6	11.2	29.7	52.7	100.0

I think about choices before acting	4.8	3.6	13.9	33.0	44.5	100.0
I think about risks of different solutions.	5.2	7.0	17.6	36.7	33.6	100.0
I change behavior that contributes to the problem	4.2	7.3	17.0	33.3	38.2	100.0
I think about possible consequences	4.5	4.5	17.0	28.8	45.2	100.0
I form a plan of action in my mind	4.8	3.6	16.1	26.4	49.1	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Information obtained show that more than three quarters of the sampled grade eight learners (85.5%) indicated that they try to come up with a strategy about what to do, do what must be done one step at a time (81.8%) and take additional actions to try to get rid of the problem (75.1%). Similarly, a significant majority (80.9%) try to think about how they might best handle the problem, concentrate their efforts on doing something about it (82.4%), think about choices before acting (77.5%) and think about risks of different solutions (70.3%). At the same time, more than two thirds of the grade eight learners (71.5%) said that they change behavior that contributes to the problem, think about possible consequences (74.0%) and form a plan of action in my mind (75.5%). Findings therefore confirmed that more than three quarters of the sampled grade eight learners (77.45%) believed that problem based coping strategies play an important role in mitigating the adverse influence of school environment on their psychological wellbeing. Data obtained from their class teachers on the strategy was as presented in Table 40. Results obtained show that more than three quarters of the class teachers observed that learners in their school employ problem-solving techniques to address academic and personal challenges (80.5%), more than half said their learners are confident in their ability to identify problems before attempting to solve them (65.8%) and are confident in their ability to analyse problems before attempting to solve them (68.3%).

Table 39

Problem -Based and psychological Wellbeing of Learners (Class Teachers)

In our school, Learners	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Employ problem-solving techniques to address academic and personal challenges.	0.0	7.3	12.2	51.2	29.3	100.0
Are confident in their ability to identify problems before attempting to solve them.	0.0	12.2	22.0	46.3	19.5	100.0
Are confident in their ability to analyse problems before attempting to solve them.	0.0	7.3	24.4	51.2	17.1	100.0
Develop effective problem-solving skills for	0.0	9.8	29.2	24.4	36.6	100.0

managing difficult situations.						
Actively seek out solutions when faced with obstacles or setbacks	0.0	2.4	19.5	43.9	34.2	100.0
Apply problem-solving strategies like role playing or seek guidance from peers.	2.4	2.4	14.6	53.7	26.9	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Similarly, a majority of the class teachers said that learners in their schools develop effective problem-solving skills for managing difficult situations (61.0%), more than three quarters indicated that their learners actively seek out solutions when faced with obstacles or setbacks (78.1%) and apply problem-solving strategies like role playing or seek guidance from peers (80.6%). Findings show that more than two thirds of the sampled class teachers (72.38%) confirmed that grade eight learners in their schools adopted problem-based strategies in mitigating the adverse influence of school environment on their psychological wellbeing which compares fairly well to the results obtained from grade eight learners. The study also sought to establish the extent to which avoidance as a strategy is adopted in coping with the adverse effects of school environment on junior school learners' psychological wellbeing. Table 41 presents the findings.

Table 40

Avoidance and Psychological Wellbeing (Learners)

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
I make fun of the situation.	38.8	13.0	14.5	13.6	20.0	100.0
I spend more time than usual alone	27.6	18.2	17.6	19.4	17.3	100.0
I act as if it hasn't happened.	22.7	15.5	21.8	20.5	19.7	100.0
I refuse to believe it has happened.	27.0	13.9	22.4	20.9	15.3	100.0
I laugh about the situation.	37.3	20.6	16.2	11.8	12.1	100.0
I daydream about things other than this.	22.7	20.9	23.3	16.4	16.7	100.0
I sleep more than usual	36.1	25.5	17.3	9.7	11.5	100.0
I do all I could to keep others from knowing how bad things were to me	15.8	13.0	25.2	24.8	21.2	100.0
I try to distract myself from the problem	14.5	9.1	14.8	29.7	31.8	100.0
I wish that people would just leave me alone	37.6	17.3	19.1	10.9	15.2	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Information obtained show that about a third of the sampled grade eight learners (33.6%) acknowledged making fun of the situation, slightly more than this proportion spent more time than usual alone (36.7%) while less than a half act as if it hasn't

happened (40.2%) and refuse to believe it has happened (36.2%). Similarly, less than a quarter laugh about the situation (23.9%), about a third daydream about things other than this (33.1%) and less than a quarter sleep more than usual (21.2%). At the same time, less than a half of the grade eight learners do all they could to keep others from knowing how bad things were to them (46.0%), more than a half try to distract themselves from the problem (61.5%) while about a quarter wish that people would just leave them alone (26.1%). Findings therefore show that more than a third of the sampled grade eight learners (35.85%) indicated adopting avoidance as a coping strategy. Data obtained from their class teachers were as presented in Table 41.

Table 41

Avoidance and psychological Wellbeing of Learners (Class Teachers)

In our school, Learners	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Resort to avoiding stressful situations or tasks.	0.0	7.3	26.8	51.2	14.6	100.0
Resort to ignoring stressful situations or tasks.	0.0	7.3	24.4	51.2	17.1	100.0
Avoid stressful situations to reduce feelings of anxiety or discomfort.	0.0	4.9	17.1	51.2	26.8	100.0
Who avoid problems hinder their ability to handle them.	0.0	0.0	26.8	46.8	24.4	100.0
Who avoid challenges hinder their ability to handle them.	0.0	9.8	19.4	48.8	22.0	100.0
Develop skills of facing and dealing with stressful situations rather than avoiding them.	0.0	7.3	14.6	48.8	29.3	100.0
Develop skills of dealing with stressful situations rather than avoiding them.	0.0	12.1	22.0	43.9	22.0	100.0
Develop skills of facing with stressful situations rather than avoiding them.	0.0	9.8	26.9	39.0	24.4	100.0
Recognize that avoiding behaviours is not beneficial in the long run.	2.4	4.9	19.5	48.8	24.4	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Results obtained show that a majority of the sampled grade eight class teachers observed that in their school, learners resort to avoiding stressful situations or tasks (65.8%), resort to ignoring stressful situations or tasks (68.3%) and avoid stressful situations to reduce feelings of anxiety or discomfort (78.0%). At the same time, more than two thirds indicated that learners who avoid problems hinder their ability to handle them (71.2%), who avoid challenges hinder their ability to handle them (70.8%) and develop skills of facing and dealing with stressful situations rather than

avoiding them (78.1%). Further analysis illustrated that a majority of the class teachers acknowledged that learners develop skills of dealing with stressful situations rather than avoiding them (65.9%), develop skills of facing with stressful situations rather than avoiding them (63.4%) and recognize that avoiding behaviours is not beneficial in the long run (73.2%). The study thus established that more than two thirds of the sampled grade eight teachers (70.52%) believe their junior school learners employ use of avoidance as a coping strategy.

The study further sought to assess the extent to which social support services were being used by junior school learners to cope with the challenges attributed to school environment. Table 42 presents findings obtained from grade eight learners.

Table 42

Social Support Services and Psychological Wellbeing (Learners)

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
I get sympathy from my friends.	6.4	5.8	11.5	28.5	47.9	100.0
I sought reassurance from those who know me best	6.7	3.6	21.8	32.1	35.8	100.0
I discuss my feelings with the guidance and counselling teacher.	9.1	7.9	12.7	35.5	34.8	100.0
I try to get support from my relatives.	3.3	4.5	15.2	26.2	48.8	100.0
There is at least one teacher in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.	4.5	6.4	13.9	22.7	52.4	100.0
There is at least one teacher in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.	5.2	6.4	15.5	20.3	52.7	100.0
I talk to the peer counsellors about how I feel.	12.1	10.6	19.4	33.0	24.9	100.0
I let feelings out with someone	26.7	13.6	17.3	24.8	17.6	100.0
I talk with brother or sister	4.8	7.3	9.1	25.5	53.3	100.0
I Let feelings out with someone	29.1	12.7	13.0	17.9	27.3	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Data obtained show that more than three quarters of the sampled grade eight learners (76.4%) get sympathy from their friends, more than two thirds (67.9%) seek reassurance from those who know them best and discuss their feelings with the guidance and counselling teacher (70.3%). At the same time, three quarters of grade eight learners (75.0%) said that they try to get support from their relatives, that there is at least one teacher in the school they can talk to if they have a problem (75.1%) and that there is at least one teacher in this school I can talk to if I have a problem

(73.0%). Further, more than a half of the learners (57.9%) confessed that they talk to the peer counsellors about how they feel, less than half said that they let feelings out with someone (42.4%) and that they let feelings out with someone (45.2%) while more than three quarters said that they talk with brother or sister (78.8%). Findings therefore showed that about two thirds (66.2%) of the sampled grade eight learners confirmed adopting social support service coping strategies. Data obtained from their class teachers were as summarized in Table 43.

Table 43

<i>Social Support Services and psychological Wellbeing of Learners (Class Teacher)</i>						
In our school, Learners	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Seek counselling services when experiencing psychological difficulties.	4.9	2.4	12.2	39.0	41.5	100.0
Solve emotional issues with their friends.	4.9	9.8	19.5	46.3	19.5	100.0
Understand seeking counselling services is beneficial for improving their emotional well-being	0.0	4.9	17.1	36.6	41.5	100.0
Understand seeking counselling services is helps them to improve coping skills.	0.0	2.4	14.6	48.8	34.2	100.0
There is a functional peer counselling group	2.4	24.4	17.1	34.1	22.0	100.0
Adults in the school assist learners to handle their personal issues	0.0	9.8	14.6	38.0	36.6	100.0
Understand that counselling services are important for promoting a supportive school environment.	0.0	2.4	17.1	46.3	34.2	100.0
Understand that counselling services are important for promoting an inclusive school environment.	0.0	7.4	14.6	39.0	39.0	100.0
Seek support from their peers	0.0	12.2	12.2	46.3	29.3	100.0
Solve emotional issues with the class teachers	0.0	7.3	7.3	48.8	36.6	100.0

Key; SD-Strongly Disagree- Disagree N-Neutral A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree

Findings show that according to a majority of the sampled class teachers that learners seek counselling services when experiencing psychological difficulties (80.5%), solve emotional issues with their friends (65.8%) and Understand seeking counselling services is beneficial for improving their emotional well-being (78.1%). Similarly, more than three quarters (83.0%) understand that seeking counselling services helps

them to improve coping skills, more than half said that there is a functional peer counselling group (56.1%), that adults in the school assist learners to handle their personal issues (74.6%) and that learners understand that counselling services are important for promoting a supportive school environment (80.5%). At the same time, more than three quarters (78.0%) said that learners understand that counselling services are important for promoting an inclusive school environment, a majority said that learners seek support from their peers (75.6%) and solve emotional issues with the class teachers (85.4%). The study thus established that more than three quarters of the sampled grade eight class teachers (75.76%) confirmed the use social support services as a coping strategy which compares favourably well with the observations of their learners.

4.4.4.2 Hypothesis Testing

The fourth objective sought to establish the influence of coping strategies on the relationship between school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The fourth hypothesis, **H₀₄** formulated for this purpose sought to establish whether Coping Strategies have a statistically significant influence on the relationship between the school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The study thus tested the relationship between elements of school environment, coping strategies and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Table 45 and 46 presents the findings.

Table 44

Influence of Coping Strategies in the Relationship between School Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners (Model Summary)

Step	-2log likelihood	Cox & Snell R ²	Nagelkerke R ²	χ^2	df	Sig.
1	156.918 ^a	0.148	0.313	4.585	1	0.335

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 6 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Independent variable in the model was school environment. The model was significant $\chi^2(1)=12.503$, $p<0.001$ and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test confirmed model fit, $\chi^2(4)=4.585$, $p=0.335$. Cox & Snell R square predicted a variance of 14.8%

while Nagelkerke R square predicted 31.3% variation in psychological wellbeing of the junior school learners explained by the model. The model with independent variable explained 90.8% of psychological wellbeing, an improvement from the initial 80.2% initially predicted. Table 45 presents information on variables in the equation.

Table 45

Influence of Coping Strategies in the Relationship between School Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Junior School Learners (Regression Coefficient

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	School Environment	1.791	0.663	21.423	1	0.003	7.205
	Problem Focus	1.906	0.432	19.476	1	0.000	6.724
	Avoidance	-0.396	0.432	.840	1	0.359	0.673
	Social Support Services	1.533	0.435	12.448	1	0.000	4.633
	Constant	-7.764	1.505	26.593	1	0.000	0.000

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Social Support Services.

Information obtained show that school environment positively and significantly predicted learners' psychological wellbeing, $\text{Wald}\chi^2(1) = 21.423$, $p = 0.003$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 7.205$). Problem-focus coping strategy positively and significantly predicted the odds of the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners, $\text{Wald}\chi^2(1) = 19.476$, $p < 0.001$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 6.724$). Avoidance as a coping strategy was negatively associated with the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners; $\text{Wald}\chi^2(1) = 0.840$, $p = 0.359$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 0.673$), the possibility of a learner adopting avoidance as a coping strategy decreasing the odds of the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners, the observation being insignificant. Adoption of social support services as a coping strategy was found to positively and significantly predict the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners; $\text{Wald}\chi^2(1) = 12.448$, $p < 0.001$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 4.633$). Thus, the study established that problem focus and social support

services are significant predictors in the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis, H₀₄ which stated that coping Strategies do not have a statistically significant influence on the relationship between the school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya was rejected.

4.4.3 .Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data was sought from SQASO on the contribution of coping strategies in the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners within their areas of jurisdictions. To begin with, as regards resources or support systems available to help learners develop effective coping strategies for managing academic and personal stressor interviewees indicated:

P1: *Physical facilities, guidance and counselling services, spiritual guidance*

P3: *Availing sport equipment for curriculum activities, having regular pastoral programs training on life skills.*

P4: *Teachers are trained on coping with stresses during annual workshops. Provision of teaching leaning resources. Invitation of health care givers and medics to examine learners to establish underlying health issues. Maintaining health records of all learners regular deworming and administration of vitamin A supplements to learners. Provision of ARV to all learners with HIV. Screening assessment and referrals to SNE learners.*

Findings illustrated existence of a number of resources or support systems meant to enable learners effectively cope with various challenges. Such strategies include provision of physical facilities, resources for social and emotional support among others. Additionally, as regards strategies for addressing avoidance behaviors and promoting proactive problem-solving skills among learners, interviewees indicated that:

P1: *Be calm and solve the problem without creating scenes. Addressing the problem and simply talking about it eg going to the retreats frequently; going to drink water. Teach learners alternative behavior e.g carrying water bottle. Notice the positive traits and offer reinforcement. Address the avoidance behavior individually, directly and aptly.*

P2: *Monitoring transition retention and completion. Encouraging teachers to guide learners to think of helpful ways which will help them feel more confident to cope with what they think are difficult situations. Giving learners authentic tasks that promote imagination and creativity. Learners can be guided to become aware of their negative thoughts.*

P3: *By encouraging the head teachers to address avoidance behavior portrayed by learners on individual bases. Encouraging learners to share out issues affecting their lives. By tracking of dropout rates and encouraging teachers to make follow up. Ensuring transition retention and completion. Giving learners authentic tasks that promote imagination and creativity.*

Study showed that a number of strategies exist that can be used in addressing avoidance behaviors and promoting proactive problem-solving skills among learners. They include having alternative problem-solving skills and guiding learners to think of helpful ways that enable them feel more confident to cope with what they think are difficult situations. The study also sought to establish strategies for adapting and improving or eliminating maladaptive coping strategies used by learners to counter stressors. In response, interviewees indicated that;

P2: *Provide required physical facilities and resources. Have school open days where students share their issues. Have more students' parents' academic days. Involve mentors in schools for role modeling. Have talent/exhibition days. Establish meals program for all learners. Provision of sanitary towels to girls.*

P3: *Create harmony between JS teachers on contract and head teachers (Most feel that they should not be in primary schools). Involve learners in creating the school rules and regulations (Let learners understand the consequences for each rule).*

P5: *Have school open days where students share their issues. Have more learner-parents' academic days. Involve mentors in schools for role modeling. Have talent/exhibition days. Provision of sanitary towels to girls.*

Findings showed that there exist several strategies for learners to adapt and improve or eliminate maladaptive coping strategies to counter stressors. They include provision of required facilities and resources, create harmony between JS teachers on contract and head teachers and involve learners in creating school rules and regulations and let them understand the consequences for each rule. In general, the

study sought to establish what could be instituted to improve psychological wellbeing among Junior School learners. In response, interviewees contended that;

P1: *Improve/create cordial relationship between the JS teachers and the head teacher. Recognize the role played by JS teachers and motivate them. Explanation on the JS curriculum to understand their pathways.*

P3: *Facilities to be provided so that learners have adequate resources. This creates motivation and reduces competition. Harmonize the issue of teachers especially the newly posted who feel they should not be in primary. Schools can have motivation speaker of stress management.*

P4: *Improve school environment so that learners can be physically and socially satisfied. This will lead to positive psychological wellbeing.*

P5: *Improve the school class environment and sanitation facilities. More parental engagement in learners' welfare. Uniform dressing code for JS. Have fair/symposium involving cluster junior schools.*

The study showed that in order to enhance junior school psychological wellbeing, it is necessary improve relationship between the JS teachers and the head teacher, recognize the role played by teachers and motivate them as well as improve school environment so that learners can be physically and socially satisfied. Other interviewees suggested harmonizing the issue of teachers especially the newly posted who feel they should not be in primary.

4.4.4.3 Discussions on Findings of the Influence of Coping Strategies in the Relationship

The fourth objective sought to establish the influence of coping strategies on the relationship between school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Contributions of problem focused, avoidance and social support services as coping strategies in the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Descriptive findings confirmed that more than three quarters of the sampled grade eight learners (77.45%) believed that problem based coping strategies play an important role in mitigating the adverse influence of school environment on the psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Their observation was corroborated by more than two thirds of the sampled class teachers (72.38%) who indicated that grade eight learners in their schools use problem-based strategies in mitigating the

adverse influence of school environment on their psychological wellbeing. Findings imply that problem-based coping strategy plays a significant role in mitigating the adverse influence of school environment on the psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Inferential analysis based on regression analysis showed that Problem-focus coping strategy positively and significantly predicted the odds of the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners, $\text{Wald}\chi^2(1) = 19.476$ $p < 0.001$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 6.724$). Findings therefore showed that problem-focus positively and significantly influences the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Research by Rodríguez (2022) emphasized the significance of adaptive coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that learners who employed problem-focused coping strategies, such as seeking solutions to their problems and utilizing available resources, experienced better psychological outcomes compared to those who relied on avoidance or denial. Wu et al. (2020) revealed various coping strategies employed by learners to manage their psychological wellbeing. These strategies include problem-solving, seeking social support, avoidance, acceptance, cognitive reappraisal, and emotional regulation. Problem-solving was the predominant approach, with seeking social support being the second most frequently utilized strategy. The research additionally indicated that coping strategies vary depending on the specific psychological health condition, with anxiety emerging as the predominant mental health concern.

Information on avoidance as a coping strategy show that more than a third of the sampled grade eight learners (35.85%) indicated adopting avoidance as a coping strategy. Their observation was corroborated by more than two thirds of the sampled grade eight teachers (70.52%) believe their junior school learners employ use of avoidance as a coping strategy. Findings imply that avoidance is a strategy employed by junior school learner to cope with the adverse effects of school environment. Inferential analysis based on regression analysis showed that avoidance as a coping strategy was negatively associated with the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners; $\text{Wald}\chi^2(1) = 0.840$, $p = 0.359$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 0.673$), the possibility of a learner adopting avoidance as a coping strategy decreasing the odds of the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners, the observation being insignificant.

Findings mean that avoidance as a coping strategy does not significantly influence the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. A study by Thompson et al (2024) found that high school learners who frequently used avoidance strategies experienced higher levels of anxiety and depression. This research highlights the detrimental effects of avoidance on learners' mental health and underscores the need for interventions that promote more adaptive coping mechanisms. Similarly, Smith et al. (2021) demonstrated that avoidance behaviors were linked to lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates among college learners.

Information on social support services as a coping strategy showed that about two thirds (66.2%) of the sampled grade eight learners confirmed adopting social support service coping strategies. Their observation was corroborated by more than three quarters of the sampled grade eight class teachers (75.76%) who confirmed the use social support services as a coping strategy. Findings imply that social support services is a strategy employed by junior school learner to cope with the adverse effects of school environment. Inferential analysis based on regression analysis showed that adoption of social support services as a coping strategy positively and significantly predict the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners; $\text{Wald}\chi^2(1) = 12.448, p < 0.001, \text{Exp}(B) = 4.633$. Findings mean that social support service positively and significantly influences the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. A study by Chen al. (2020) in Hong Kong revealed that social support from family and friends significantly reduced academic stress among high school learners. This research highlights the culturally specific ways in which social support functions, noting that Asian learners often rely heavily on familial networks for emotional and psychological support. On the other hand, Brown and Toombs (2021) found that Australian learners who engaged in supportive peer relationships reported better mental health outcomes and higher academic achievement. The study emphasizes the role of school-based programs in fostering supportive environments where learners can develop strong peer connections.

The study therefore generally established those coping strategies positively as significantly influences the relationship between school environment and

psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. This means that coping strategies such as problem-focus and social support services as significant predictors moderates the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Research by Schaeper (2020) on academic success among higher education learners underscores that effective coping strategies are vital for managing academic stress. This is supported by (Radicke, 2021) who asserts that effective coping and management of stress among young people can reduce the risk of mental health disorders and strengthen protective factors. Research indicates that problem-focused coping and seeking social support are common strategies that contribute positively to psychological well-being (Dray et al. (2017).

Qualitative data sought illustrated that in order to enhance junior school psychological wellbeing, it is necessary to improve relationship between the JS teachers and the head teacher, recognize the role played by JS teachers and motivate them as well as improve school environment so that learners can be physically and socially satisfied. Other interviewees suggested harmonizing the issue of teachers especially the newly posted who feel they should not be in primary. Research by Dray et al. (2017) underscored the significance of the school environment in shaping the coping strategies of learners. Learners often rely on a mix of problem-focused coping, avoidance, and social support to manage the challenges they face. Social support, particularly from family and community members, plays a pivotal role in enhancing psychological well-being. The learners often employ unique coping strategies that are deeply rooted in their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. For instance, traditional practices and community gatherings provide significant psychological support, helping learners navigate their educational and personal challenges.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study set out to establish the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing among junior school learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. It also sought to ascertain the moderating influence of selected coping strategies in the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing among junior school learners. Specifically, it sought to determine the relationship between school physical environment and psychological wellbeing among learners in Junior Schools, the relationship between school social environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools, the relationship between school emotional environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools and the influence of coping strategies on the relationship between school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. A descriptive survey and correlational research design was formulated to test the four study hypotheses. Data was collected from 371 individuals including 325 grade eight learners, 41 grade eight class teachers and 5 Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SQASO) in Tharaka Nithi County in upper Eastern region in Kenya. Data obtained was analyzed descriptively using frequency and percentages and inferentially using Logistic regression based on study objectives.

Relative to the first objectives, descriptive findings illustrated that less than a half of the sampled grade eight learners felt that school facilities as an attribute of the school's physical environment adequately provided for their psychological needs implying that a majority of the sampled schools were inadequately equipped with

physical facilities to adequately provide for the needs of the learners. Information on adequacy of learning resources and their effective use showed that slightly more than half of the sampled grade eight learners believed that their teachers effectively utilized available learning resources which could have a positive influence on their psychological wellbeing implying that a significant proportion of Junior School learners were experiencing ineffective use of available resources which could impact negatively on their psychological wellbeing. Information from class teachers as regards the contributions of a school's physical environment on learners' psychological wellbeing confirmed the belief of a significant majority that physical environment has a contribution on learners' psychological wellbeing. Inferential analysis based on regression analysis illustrated that school physical environment positively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners implying that school physical environment is positively and significantly related with psychological wellbeing of Junior School learners. Qualitative analysis showed that generally, public schools in Tharaka Nithi domiciling junior school have poor quality physical facilities which in some cases are also inadequate. According to the interviewees, most schools lacked laboratories and workshops considered significant for implementation of the curriculum. In some schools, classrooms were said to be either old and dilapidated or incomplete. Findings therefore imply the poor physical facilities and inadequate teaching and learning resources could be impacting negatively on learners' psychological wellbeing.

Data obtained relative to the second objective revealed that less than half of the sampled grade eight learners (enjoyed a healthy relationship with their peers implying that a majority of the sampled learners had poor relations with their peer which could be detrimental to their psychological wellbeing. Information on teacher-learner relations showed that a majority of the sampled grade eight learners confirmed having a healthy teacher-learner interaction significant for their psychological wellbeing. Information from class teachers as regards the relationship between social environment and learners' psychological wellbeing showed that a significant majority of the sampled grade eight class teachers confirmed that social interaction among learners is significant for their psychological wellbeing. Inferential analysis based on regression analysis illustrated that social environment negatively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Qualitative analysis

showed that positive peer relationships among junior school learners is being fostered through formation of peer counselling clubs, encouraging social interaction during co-curricular activities such as games, sports and music among others. It was also illustrated that if schools establish teacher-learner welfare clubs, teacher-learner academic families, operational guidance and counselling departments and open school sports days for teachers and learners they can provide opportunities for teacher learner interactions.

Relative to the third objective, data obtained showed that only about a third of the sampled grade eight learners indicated feeling positive about school connectedness implying a lack of connectedness and a sense of belonging by a significant proportion of learners. Information on self-awareness showed that majority of the sampled grade eight learners had high levels of self-awareness which is critical for their wellbeing. Information from class teachers as regards their conception of emotional environment and junior school learners' psychological wellbeing show that more than three quarter of the sampled grade eight class teachers confirmed that emotional environment plays an important role in determining learners' psychological wellbeing. Inferential analysis based on regression analysis illustrated that that emotional environment negatively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners implying that emotional environment is negatively and significantly related to psychological wellbeing among junior school learners.

With regards to the fourth objective, descriptive statistics showed that more than three quarters of the sampled grade eight learners believed that problem focused coping strategies play an important role in mitigating the adverse influence of school environment on the psychological wellbeing among junior school learners. Their observation was corroborated by more than two thirds of the sampled class teachers who indicated that grade eight learners in their schools used problem-focused strategies in mitigating the adverse influence of school environment on their psychological wellbeing. Inferential analysis based on regression analysis showed that Problem-focused coping strategy positively and significantly predicted the odds of the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing among junior school learners.

Information on avoidance as a coping strategy showed that more than a third of the sampled grade eight learners indicated adopting avoidance as a coping strategy. Their observation was corroborated by more than two thirds of the sampled grade eight class teachers who believed their junior school learners employ use of avoidance as a coping strategy. Findings imply that avoidance is a strategy employed by junior school learners to cope with the adverse effects of school environment.

Inferential analysis based on regression analysis showed that avoidance as a coping strategy was negatively associated with the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. Information on social support services as a coping strategy showed that about two thirds of the sampled grade eight learners confirmed adopting social support service as a coping strategies. Their observation was corroborated by more than three quarters of the sampled grade eight class teachers who confirmed the use social support services as a coping strategy. Findings imply that social support services is a strategy employed by junior school learner to cope with the adverse effects of school environment. Inferential analysis based on regression analysis showed that adoption of problem-focused and social support services as coping strategies positively and significantly predicted the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners implying that coping strategies such as problem focus and social support services moderates the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners.

5.2 Conclusion

The study sought to establish the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing among junior school learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. It also sought to ascertain the moderating influence of selected coping strategies in the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing among junior school learners. The first objective sought to establish the relationship between school physical environment and psychological wellbeing among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Study findings relative to this objective showed that school physical environment positively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners implying that school physical environment is positively and significantly related with psychological

wellbeing of junior school learners. It can therefore be concluded that school physical environment is positively and significantly related with psychological wellbeing of junior school learners.

The second objective sought to determine the relationship between school social environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Study findings relative to this objective showed that social environment negatively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners implying that school's social environment is negatively and significantly related to the psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. It can therefore be concluded that the school's social environment is negatively and significantly related to the psychological wellbeing of junior school learners.

The third objective sought to examine the relationship between school emotional environment and Psychological Well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Data obtained relative to the objective showed that emotional environment negatively and significantly predicted psychological wellbeing of junior school learners implying that emotional environment is negatively and significantly the related to psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. It can therefore be concluded that emotional environment is negatively and significantly the related to psychological wellbeing of junior school learners.

The fourth objective sought to establish the influence of coping strategies on the relationship between school environment and the psychological well-being among learners in Junior Schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Findings relative to the objective showed that adoption of problem-focus and social support services as coping strategies positively and significantly predict the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners implying that coping strategies such as problem focused and social support services moderates the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners. It can therefore be concluded that coping strategies such as problem focus and social support services moderates the relationship between school environment and psychological wellbeing of junior school learners.

5.3 Recommendation of the Study

The study recommended that public junior school managements in collaboration with other education stakeholders should put in place strategies aimed at strengthening aspects of school environment in order to foster junior school learners' psychological wellbeing. In particular;

- i. The Ministry of Education (MoE) should put in place strategies aimed at improving the quality and quantity of junior school physical facilities and learning resources in order to provide a more conducive school physical environment for learners' improved psychological wellbeing.
- ii. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should launch and monitor turn-around initiatives aimed at fostering quality school social environment for learners' improved psychological wellbeing. Areas of focus could include workshops on peer relations management techniques, seminar on teacher-learner interaction, problem-solving techniques, and goal-setting for social and academic success could be part of the initiatives.
- iii. The school administrators should design and implement turn-around interventions focusing on the junior school emotional environment to enable learners cope better with the emotional environment. Possible areas of intervention could include school activities aimed at providing a forum for open interaction between junior school learners, their teachers and other stakeholders to enhance feeling of school connectedness as well as feeling of togetherness.
- iv. The head teachers should improve programs that aid junior school learners to cope better with the possible adverse influence of school environment on their psychological wellbeing. Possible programs could include strengthening school guidance and counselling programs to equip learners' better diagnostic and management skills of school environment, seminars and workshops on how to best implement coping strategies.

5.4 Suggestion for Further Studies

- i. The location of this study was in Tharaka Nithi in Kenya while the subject of focus was the relationship between school environment and psychological well-being of junior school learners. Studies in other location to establish the

relationship between school environment and psychological well-being of junior school learners is proposed.

- ii. The study adopted a descriptive and correlational research design. A longitudinal study to determine the relationship between school environment and psychological well-being of junior school learners in Kenya is suggested.
- iii. A comparative study of the relationship between school environment and psychological well-being of learners in public and private junior schools in Kenya is also suggested.

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APENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

Dear Respondent,

RE: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I am a student at Chuka University pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Counselling Psychology. I intend to carry out a research as one of the requirements for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Counselling Psychology. My research topic is: **Relationship between school environment ,coping strategies and psychological wellbeing among Junior School learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.**

This study has been approved by Chuka University Ethics Review Board., so it poses no danger to you. The information obtained from the study will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Your identity will not be revealed in any way should you agree to participate in the study.

You are kindly requested to participate in the study but you are free to decline or withdraw at any point in the course of study. If you agree to participate, kindly sign the space provided. Thank you for your cooperation.

Beatrice N. Mugambi.
(Researcher)

Sign.....

You have been identified as a potential participant in this research. The information you provide is expected help to determine the relationship between school environment ,coping strategies and psychological wellbeing among Junior School learners inTharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The information you give will be treated as confidential. Kindly provide the information that is well known to you. There are no right or wrong responses. Your support and co-operation is important and will be highly appreciated.

•

Please put a tick in the appropriate box for each of the statements below.

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-----|----------------|-----|
| 1. What is your gender? | Male | () | Female | () |
| 2. Type of School. | Public School | () | Private School | () |
| 3. Category of School: | Boarding | () | Day | () |
| 4. Composition of the School: | Mixed | () | Boys | () |
| | Girls | () | | |

Indicate how much you Agree or Disagree with the Following Psychological Wellbeing Statements. Please use a tick $\{\sqrt{\}$ to indicate your opinion on each statement.

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
PWB 1	I feel happy about myself					
PWB 2	I feel confident about myself					
PWB 3	I feel positive about myself					
PWB 4	I am good at managing my daily responsibilities					
PWB 5	People are friendly to me					
PWB 6	Generally, people are welcoming towards me					
PWB 7	I have enough choice about how I spend my time					
PWB 8	I feel that I learn a lot of things these days					
PWB 9	I feel positive about my future					

Section 3: School Environment Scale

1. Physical environment

School Facilities

Guided by the statements provided Indicate by putting a tick {√} against each statement the extent to which you agree or disagree regarding the facilities in your school. **Answer Format:** 1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree; 3. Neutral (Neither agree nor Disagree);

4= Disagree and 5=Strongly Disagree

	School Facilities Statements	1	2	3	4	5
SES 1	I am satisfied with the condition of school buildings					
SES 2	My school is usually clean					
SES 3	The classrooms are well equipped					
SES 4	My school has comfortable desks and chairs					
SES 5	My school has security measures (such as CCTV cameras, Security Guards)					
SES 6	My school has safety measures (such as First AID Kits,)					

Learning Resources Statements

The following statements are about the learning resources in your school. Kindly indicate by using a tick {√} how often the teachers use the listed resources

Answer Format: 1= Always; 2=Often3= Sometimes4=Rarely 5=Never

	My teachers often teach using;	1	2	3	4	5
SES 7	Print resources (such as textbooks, pamphlet, study guides)					
SES 8	Audio resources (such as cassettes, radio, podcast)					
SES 9	Visual resources (such as pictures, models, real objects, maps, projectors, photographs)					
SES 10	Audio visual resources (such as slides, tapes, filmstrips, television, video)					
SES 11	Electronic interactive (such as computers, calculators, tablets)					

2. Social Interactions

Kindly indicate by using a tick {√} the level to which you agree or disagree with the statements.

Answer Format: 1= Always; 2=Often3= Sometimes4= Rarely 5=Never

Peer -relationships Statements

	How often would your classmates:	1	2	3	4	5
SES 12	Choose you on their team.					
SES 13	Help you if you were hurt.					
SES 14	Explain something to you if you did not understand.					
SES 15	Help you if something is bothering you.					
SES 16	Tell you to join them when you are alone and share things with them.					

	Teacher-Learner Interactions Statements	1	2	3	4	5
SES 17	My teachers are fair when dealing with learners					
SES 18	I feel I can go to my class teacher with the things that are in my mind					
SES 19	Teachers believe that all learners can learn					
SES 20	Most of my teachers really listen to what I have to say					
SES 21	Teachers respect my opinions in the classroom.					
SES 22	Teachers value my contributions in the classroom.					

3. Emotional Environment

Indicate against each statement the extent to which you agree or disagree regarding the statements. **Answer Format:** 1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree; 3.Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree); 4= Disagree and 5=Strongly Disagree

SES	School Connectedness Statements	1	2	3	4	5
SES 23	I feel close to people at school.					
SES 24	I feel like I am part of this school					
SES 25	I am happy to be in this school					
SES 26	Teachers treat learners fairly in this school					
SES 27	Learners feel safe in this school					

	Self-Awareness Statements	1	2	3	4	5
SES 28	I feel welcomed in school each day.					
SES 29	My emotions change depending on where I am in the school.					
SES 30	My behavior changes depending on where I am in the school.					
SES 31	Talking to teachers make me happy					
	Talking to other learners in the school make me happy					
SES 32	Some things about school stress me					
SES 33	I know what affects my emotional well-being in school					

Section 4: Coping Strategies

Which of the following statements most accurately describes what you do when you experience a stressful situation?

Answer Format: 1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree; 3. Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree);4= Disagree and 5=Strongly Disagree

	Problem-Focused Statements	1	2	3	4	5
CSI 1	I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.					
CSI 2	I do what must be done one step at a time.					
CSI 3	I take additional actions to try to get rid of the problem.					
CSI 4	I try to think about how I might best handle the problem.					
CSI 5	I concentrate my efforts on doing something about it.					
CSI 6	I think about choices before acting					
CSI 7	I think about risks of different solutions.					
CSI 8	I change behavior that contributes to the problem					
CSI 9	I think about possible consequences					
CSI 10	I form a plan of action in my mind					
	Avoidance Statements	1	2	3	4	5
CSI 11	I make fun of the situation.					
CSI 12	I spend more time than usual alone					
CSI 13	I act as if it hasn't happened.					
CSI 14	I refuse to believe it has happened.					
CSI 15	I laugh about the situation.					
CSI 16	I daydream about things other than this.					
CSI 17	I sleep more than usual					
CSI 18	I do all I could to keep others from knowing how bad things were to me					
CSI 19	I try to distract myself from the problem					
CSI 20	I wish that people would just leave me alone					
	Social Support Services Statements	1	2	3	4	5
CSI 21	I get sympathy from my friends.					
CSI 22	I sought reassurance from those who know me best					
CSI 23	I discuss my feelings with the guidance and counselling teacher.					
CSI 24	I try to get support from my relatives.					
CSI 25	There is at least one teacher in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.					
CSI 26	There is at least one teacher in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.					
CSI 27	I talk to the peer counsellors about how I feel.					

CSI 28	I let feelings out with someone					
CSI 29	I talk with brother or sister					
CSI 30	I Let feelings out with someone					

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix III: Questionnaire for Grade 8 Class Teachers

This Questionnaire aims to obtain information from you as a class teacher on the relationship between school environments, coping strategies and psychological wellbeing among Junior School learners in Tharaka Nithi County. You are kindly requested to be honest in information you give. There are no correct or incorrect responses. The data gathered from this survey will be handled confidentially and solely utilized for academic purposes. Your participation in the study is voluntary.

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research.

Section One: Demographic Variables

Please put a tick in the appropriate box for each of the statements below.

1. What is your age bracket?
Below 30 years () 30 - 40 years ()
41 - 50 years () above 50 years ()
2. What is your gender?
Male () Female ()
3. Highest Academic Qualification
() Diploma () Doctorate degree
() Bachelor's degree () Master's degree
4. Type of School.
Public School () Private School ()
5. Category of School
Boarding () Day ()
6. Composition of the School
Mixed () Boys only () Girls only ()
7. Terms of service. Contract () Permanent ()
8. Work load in terms of number of lessons per week
Below 25 () 25-28 () Above 28 ()
9. What is the total number of learners in your present grade 8 class?
Less than 40 () 40- 045 () Above 45 ()
10. Do you have any formal training in counselling Yes () No ()

Section Two: Psychosocial Wellbeing

Indicate against each statement the extent to which you agree or disagree regarding the effects of the school environment on the learners' psychosocial wellbeing.

Where 1=Strongly Agree; 2=Agree; 3=Neutral; 4=Disagree and 5=Strongly Disagree

	Psychological Statements	Wellbeing	1	2	3	4	5
1	The school environment promotes a sense of self-acceptance among learners.						
2	The school environment promotes a sense of self-love among learners.						
3	Learners have the skills to manage stress effectively						
3	Learners have the resources to manage stress effectively						
4	Learners have the skills and resources to manage stress effectively and cope with academic pressures.						
5	The school's environment affects the quality of learners' relationships.						
6	Learners make meaningful decisions about their learning and academic pursuits						
7	School plays a significant role in guiding learners toward a sense of purpose and direction in life.						
8	The school environment supports opportunities for learners' individual growth and development.						

Section Three: School Environment

Please use a tick {✓} to indicate against each statement the extent to which you agree or disagree regarding the effects of the school environment on the learners' psychosocial wellbeing:

. **Answer Format:** 1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree; 3. Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree); 4= Disagree and 5=Strongly Disagree

1. Physical environment and psychological wellbeing

1	In our school,	1	2	3	4	5
2	School facilities influence the psychological wellbeing of learners					
3	Availability of school facilities positively affects learners learning experience.					
4	Access to adequate learning resources positively influences learner academic achievement and understanding of subjects					
5	Equitable distribution of learning resources among learners promotes a fair and inclusive learning environment					

2. Social Interactions and psychological wellbeing

	In our school,	1	2	3	4	5
6	Peer relationships affect the psychological wellbeing of learners					
7	Close friendships and social connections with peers is important for learners' social and emotional development.					
8	Teachers have a sense of collective responsibility for learners' wellbeing					
9	Teachers always show respect towards learners					

3. Emotional Environment and psychological Wellbeing of Learners

	In our school,	1	2	3	4	5
10	The emotional environment affects psychological wellbeing of learners					
11	Adults care about learners learning and as individuals					
12	Peers care about learners learning and as individuals					
13	Learners know what affects their emotional wellbeing in school					
14	Teacher's emotional behaviour affects the psychological wellbeing of learners.					

Section Four: Coping Mechanism

Problem solving statements.

	In our school, Learners	1	2	3	4	5
1	Employ problem-solving techniques to address academic and personal challenges.					
2	Are confident in their ability to identify problems before attempting to solve them.					
3	Are confident in their ability to analyse problems before attempting to solve them.					
4	Develop effective problem-solving skills for managing difficult situations.					
5	Actively seek out solutions when faced with obstacles or setbacks					
6	Apply problem-solving strategies like role playing or seek guidance from peers.					

Avoidance Statements

	In our school, Learners	1	2	3	4	5
7	Resort to avoiding stressful situations or tasks.					
8	Resort to ignoring stressful situations or tasks.					
9	Avoid stressful situations to reduce feelings of anxiety or discomfort.					
11	Who avoid problems hinder their ability to handle them.					
12	Who avoid challenges hinder their ability to handle them.					
13	Develop skills of facing and dealing with stressful situations rather than avoiding them.					

14	Develop skills of dealing with stressful situations rather than avoiding them.					
15	Develop skills of facing with stressful situations rather than avoiding them.					
16	Recognize that avoiding behaviours is not beneficial in the long run.					

Social Support services Statements

	In our school, Learners	1	2	3	4	5
17	Seek counselling services when experiencing psychological difficulties.					
18	Solve emotional issues with their friends.					
19	Understand seeking counselling services is beneficial for improving their emotional well-being					
20	Understand seeking counselling services is helps them to improve coping skills.					
21	There is a functional peer counselling group					
	Adults in the school assist learners to handle their personal issues					
22	Understand that counselling services are important for promoting a supportive school environment.					
23	Understand that counselling services are important for promoting an inclusive school environment.					
24	Seek support from their peers					
25	Solve emotional issues with the class teachers					

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix IV: Interview Schedule for Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers.

Introduction

My name is Beatrice Mugambi, and I am conducting research on the moderating effect of coping strategies on the relationship between school environments and psychological wellbeing of learners in junior schools in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Kindly respond to the best of your knowledge to each of the questions. No response is right or wrong. The information obtained from this study will be treated confidentially and will not be used for any other purpose other than academic.

Thank you for accepting to take part in the programme.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Introduction: Section 1: School Environment

1. For how long have you been a Sub County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer?

2. For how long have you served in your current Station?

3. i. What is the general perception of stakeholders regarding Junior Schools?

- ii. How does this influence the psychological wellbeing of learners in Junior Schools especially grade 8?

4. What are some of the factors influencing the psychological wellbeing of learners in grade 8?

Section II: School Environment

5. School Physical Environment and psychological Wellbeing of learners

- i. How would you evaluate the quality and adequacy of school facilities in Junior Schools in the County?

ii. What measures are in place to ensure that school facilities contribute to a conducive learning environment and learners' overall well-being?

iii. How do you perceive the influence of the physical environment on learners' engagement, motivation, and overall satisfaction with their school experience?

6. Social Interactions and psychological Wellbeing of Learners

i. What strategies does the county education department employ to promote positive peer relationships among learners?

ii. How are teacher-learner relationships nurtured and supported within educational institutions?

iii. How does social interactions contribute to learners' psychological well-being and academic success in the County?

7. School Emotional Environment and Psychological Wellbeing of Learners

i. How does the county quality assurance and standards department support school connectedness for the learners in the county?

ii. How does the emotional wellbeing of teachers affect the psychological wellbeing of learners?

- iii. Please discuss any initiatives or guidelines to improve emotional wellbeing among learners and teachers.

Coping Strategies:

8. What resources or support systems are available to help learners develop effective coping strategies for managing academic and personal stressor?

9. How does the county education department address avoidance behaviors and promote proactive problem-solving skills among learners?

10. In your own opinion, what should the stakeholders in Junior Schools do to enhance adaptive coping strategies and improve or eliminate maladaptive coping strategies used by learners to counter stressors?

Conclusion

In your opinion, what should be done to improve psychological wellbeing among Junior School learners?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix V: Ethics Review Board Approval Letter



CHUKA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Telephones: 020-2310512/18

Direct Line: 0772894438

Email: info@chuka.ac.ke,

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka

Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

12th July, 2024

REF: CUIERC/NACOSTI/568

TO: Beatrice N. Mugambi

RE: Moderating Effect of Selected Coping Strategies on the Relationship Between School Environment and Psychological Well being Among Junior School Learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

This is to inform you that *Chuka University IERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812*. The approval period is 12th July, 2024 – 12th July, 2025.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

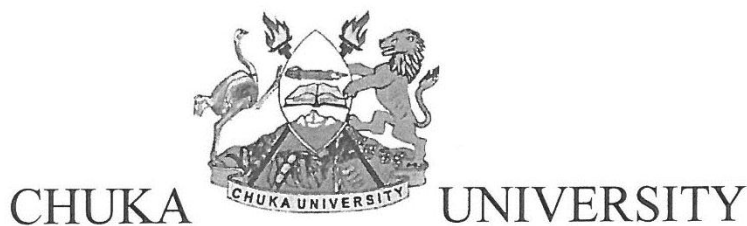
- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Chuka University IERC*.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Chuka University IERC*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Benjamin Kanga
SECRETARY

Appendix VI: Institution Introductory Letter



Knowledge is Wealth (*Sapientia divitia est*) Akili ni Mali

**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Telephones: 020-2310512/18
Direct Line: 020-268 7625

postgraduate@chuka.ac.ke

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka
Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

REF: AD23/38501/18

17th July, 2024

**Director
National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete
P O Box 30623, 00100
Nairobi.**

Dear Sir / Madam,

Beatrice N. Mugambi

The above-named person is a *bona fide* student of Chuka University pursuing PhD in Counseling Psychology proposal titled: **“Moderating Effects of Selected Coping Strategies on the Relationship Between School Environment and Psychological Well Being Among Junior School Learners in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.**

Ms. Mugambi has defended at the Faculty level and is now expected to conduct research. Any assistance accorded will be highly appreciated

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Moses Muraya, Ph.D.

**DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Appendix VII: Research Permit

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 667695	Date of Issue: 30/July/2024
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Ms.. BEATRICE NKIROTE MUGAMBI of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Tharaka-Nithi on the topic: MODERATING EFFECT OF SELECTED COPING STRATEGIES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG JUNIOR SCHOOL LEARNERS IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 30/July/2025.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/24/38353	
667695 Applicant Identification Number	 Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code 
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