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The Influence of Parental Support on Juvenile Delinquency in Mombasa County, Kenya

By

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Abstract
The purpose of this article was to investigate the influence of parental support on Juvenile delinquency in Mombasa County, Kenya. The contention of the article is that juvenile delinquency presents a critical socio-legal challenge in Mombasa County, Kenya, undermining community stability and the well-being of youth. While family dynamics are broadly recognized as influential, the specific mechanisms of parental support within this unique coastal context remain insufficiently understood. Anchored in Social Control Theory and Social Learning Theory, this study adopted an analytical cross-sectional mixed-methods design to assess the influence of parental support on juvenile delinquency among adolescents aged 13–17 years in Likoni Sub-County. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, with quantitative analysis performed via descriptive statistics and binary logistic regression. The results revealed that while educational support was present in many households, financial instability was prevalent, with nearly half of respondents reporting delays in fee payments. The regression analysis established a robust association between parental support and delinquency. Specifically, the absence of parental involvement such as failing to ensure school attendance or providing learning materials drastically increased the odds of delinquent behavior, with odds ratios exceeding 50.0 in several categories. Furthermore, family financial problems were identified as a significant predictor of delinquency. The study concludes that parental support acts as a critical protective buffer against crime. Consequently, effective prevention strategies in Mombasa must move beyond punitive measures to include holistic family-centered programs that enhance parental capacity and alleviate socio-economic pressures.

Key words: Kenya, Juvenile Delinquency, Parental Support, Mombasa County, Parental Monitoring, Adolescents

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1.0 Introduction

Juvenile delinquency is a major social, developmental, and public security concern because of its implications for individual well-being, family stability, community safety, and the broader social order. The term generally refers to unlawful, antisocial, or socially deviant behaviours committed by children and adolescents, including theft, assault, substance abuse, truancy, vandalism, gang involvement, and other forms of offending. Although juvenile delinquency is influenced by multiple interacting factors, the family remains one of the most important social environments in which young people develop behavioural patterns, values, emotional regulation, and attitudes towards authority. Within the family, parental support is particularly important because it encompasses emotional warmth, guidance, supervision, communication, encouragement, protection, and involvement in the child's everyday life.

In situations where parents provide consistent support and appropriate monitoring, young people are more likely to develop positive social relationships, internalize acceptable behavioural norms, and develop resilience against negative peer and environmental influences. Conversely, inadequate parental attention, weak supervision, family conflict, neglect, and poor communication may expose adolescents to circumstances that increase their vulnerability to delinquent behaviour. It is against this background that the present study examines the influence of parental support on juvenile delinquency in Mombasa County, Kenya, with particular attention to how parental involvement, emotional support, supervision, communication, and guidance shape adolescents' susceptibility to delinquent behaviour.

At the global level, juvenile delinquency has increasingly been understood as a product of complex interactions between individual, family, peer, school, and community factors. Contemporary approaches to prevention therefore emphasize the importance of strengthening protective environments around children rather than focusing exclusively on punishment after offending has occurred. The family constitutes the first and most enduring social institution through which children learn behavioural expectations and acquire mechanisms for coping with challenges. Parental support can serve as a protective factor by creating a sense of belonging, providing appropriate behavioural boundaries, and enabling parents to identify emerging problems before they develop into serious offending.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency in Mombasa County has emerged as a critical socio-legal challenge, threatening community stability and the future of the youth, yet the specific influence of parental support on these delinquent behaviors remains insufficiently understood in this coastal context. While national studies have established a link between family dysfunction and youth crime, there is a paucity of empirical research focusing on how distinct dimensions of parental support such as emotional nurturing, financial provision, and monitoring interact with the unique socio-economic stressors in Mombasa to either mitigate or exacerbate delinquency (Wanza, 2020). Furthermore, existing interventions often rely on generalized rehabilitation frameworks that overlook the nuances of parental engagement, leading to high recidivism rates because the root familial causes are not adequately addressed (Ngige, 2022).

Consequently, this study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the relationship between parental support and juvenile delinquency in Mombasa County to inform the development of targeted, family-centered prevention strategies.

1.2 Literature Review

Beelmann and Klahr (2022), through a systematic review and meta-analysis of parenting programmes, demonstrate the significance of parenting practices in preventing antisocial behaviour among children and young people. Their findings indicate that interventions designed to improve parenting skills can contribute to reductions in antisocial and delinquent behaviours. This evidence is important because it suggests that parental support is not merely a background characteristic of family life but can constitute an active mechanism for preventing problematic behaviour. In this regard, effective parenting involves more than providing material necessities; it includes responsive communication, consistent discipline, supervision, emotional availability, and the capacity to establish appropriate expectations for children's behaviour.

The protective role of parents is further supported by Farrington, Ttofi, and Crago (2022), who examine risk and protective factors associated with youth offending and the effectiveness of prevention programmes. Their work identifies family-related factors, including parental monitoring and family support, among the important protective influences capable of reducing young people's risk of offending across different contexts. Parental monitoring enables caregivers to know where adolescents spend their time, who their friends are, and what activities they engage in outside the home. Such monitoring can reduce opportunities for engagement in risky behaviour while simultaneously communicating parental concern and responsibility. Importantly, effective monitoring should not be confused with excessive control.

Adolescents require a balance between parental supervision and increasing autonomy as they mature. When supervision is absent, young people may become more exposed to delinquent peers, substance use, gang activities, and other risky environments. Conversely, supportive monitoring can strengthen parent-child relationships and increase adolescents' willingness to disclose difficulties. Farrington et al. (2022) therefore provides an important basis for examining parental support as a protective factor against juvenile delinquency, particularly in environments where young people face multiple social and economic pressures.

The relationship between family conditions and juvenile delinquency is also evident in the African context. Omede and Adekoya (2022), in their study of family background and juvenile delinquency in Nigeria, emphasize the importance of family structure and the availability of parental support in shaping young people's behavioural outcomes. Their findings demonstrate that weaknesses within the family environment can contribute to conditions in which delinquent behaviour becomes more likely. Family instability may affect children's emotional security, supervision, access to guidance, and sense of belonging. Where parents are unable or unwilling to provide adequate support, adolescents may seek alternative sources of identity and acceptance from peers or groups outside the family.

In some circumstances, such groups may reinforce antisocial attitudes and behaviours. The Nigerian context is particularly relevant to the present study because Kenya and Nigeria share several social characteristics as African societies, including strong extended-family traditions, rapid urbanization, socioeconomic inequalities, and challenges associated with changing family structures. Nevertheless, the findings should not be generalized uncritically because social, cultural, economic, and institutional conditions differ between countries.

Instead, the Nigerian evidence provides a comparative basis for understanding how weaknesses in family support may interact with broader environmental factors to influence juvenile delinquency.

Similarly, Ebrahim (2021), examining parental supervision and juvenile delinquency in Cape Town, South Africa, demonstrates the importance of parental supervision in understanding youth involvement in crime. Parental supervision represents a critical dimension of support because parents who know their children's activities and social networks are better positioned to provide guidance and intervene when risky behaviours emerge. However, Ebrahim's analysis also highlights the influence of socioeconomic conditions on parents' ability to supervise their children effectively. Parents experiencing unemployment, poverty, demanding work schedules, or other socioeconomic difficulties may have limited time and resources to monitor their children's activities.

Consequently, weak parental supervision should not always be interpreted as deliberate parental neglect. In some cases, it may reflect structural pressures affecting families. This observation is important for research in Kenya because socioeconomic inequalities can shape the capacity of households to provide consistent emotional and practical support. Thus, understanding juvenile delinquency requires consideration not only of whether parents provide support but also of the social and economic circumstances within which parenting takes place.

Evidence from East Africa further strengthens the argument that family-related factors are associated with adolescent delinquency. Nyamhanga and Frumence (2022), in their cross-sectional study among secondary school students in Tanzania, examine factors associated with juvenile delinquency and identify a range of sociodemographic and family-related influences. Tanzania provides an especially useful regional comparison for Kenya because the two countries share geographical proximity, cultural linkages, socioeconomic characteristics, and aspects of their education and family systems.

The findings suggest that adolescent behaviour cannot be separated from the social environments in which young people live and develop. Parental monitoring and support can provide adolescents with guidance and boundaries, while weak family relationships may increase vulnerability to problematic behaviour. The Tanzanian evidence therefore reinforces the need to investigate parental support within specific local contexts rather than assuming that global explanations of juvenile delinquency apply uniformly across societies.

In Kenya, juvenile delinquency has been associated with several interconnected family and social factors. Wanza (2020), an assessment of the causes of juvenile delinquency among youth in juvenile remand homes, identifies inadequate parental support and guidance as significant factors associated with delinquent behaviour among young people. This finding is particularly important because young people in remand institutions represent an extreme manifestation of behavioural and social problems that may develop over time. The absence of parental guidance can leave adolescents without adequate mechanisms for distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable behaviour, coping with peer pressure, resolving conflicts, or responding to difficult circumstances.

Moreover, where children perceive that parents are emotionally unavailable or uninterested in their lives, they may become increasingly dependent on peers for advice, recognition, and emotional support. Wanza's (2020) findings therefore provide a Kenyan basis for examining parental support as a possible protective factor against juvenile delinquency. However, delinquency should not be attributed exclusively to parents because young people's behaviour is shaped by multiple interacting factors, including peers, schools, neighbourhood conditions, poverty, substance availability, and exposure to violence.

The importance of family structure in Kenya is further demonstrated by Nyambane and Mose (2021), who examine the relationship between family structure and juvenile delinquency in Nakuru County. Their study emphasizes the importance of stable family environments and active parental support in reducing deviant behaviour. Family structure can influence the availability of caregivers, the distribution of parental responsibilities, the consistency of supervision, and the emotional environment within which children develop.

However, the relationship between family structure and delinquency should be interpreted carefully. A particular family structure does not automatically produce delinquent behaviour, just as living in a two-parent household does not guarantee positive behavioural outcomes. Rather, the quality of relationships, parental involvement, communication, emotional support, and supervision may be more important than family structure alone. This distinction is significant for the present study because it shifts attention from simply asking whether adolescents come from particular family arrangements to examining the extent to which parents actively participate in their children's lives and providing the support required for healthy development.

Ochieng and Omondi (2022) provide additional Kenyan evidence through their examination of parental monitoring and juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Kisumu County. Their study highlights the role of parental monitoring and emotional support in reducing delinquent behaviours among school-going adolescents. Monitoring is particularly important during adolescence because this developmental stage is characterized by increasing independence and greater exposure to peers and environments beyond the immediate family. Adolescents spend considerable time in schools, social groups, neighbourhoods, and increasingly digital environments where parental oversight may be limited. Effective parents therefore need to maintain communication with their children and understand their social experiences without undermining their developing independence. Emotional support is equally important because adolescents who experience acceptance, encouragement, and open communication may be more likely to seek parental assistance when facing peer pressure, academic difficulties, interpersonal conflicts, or other challenges. The Kisumu study provides an important county-level comparison for Mombasa because it demonstrates that parental monitoring and emotional support can be examined empirically within the Kenyan context.

Mbugua (2021) similarly emphasizes parental involvement as an important protective factor against juvenile delinquency in Kenya. Active parental participation allows parents to understand their children's experiences, identify behavioural changes, communicate expectations, and provide timely guidance. Parental involvement may take different forms, including helping children with schoolwork, attending school meetings, discussing personal problems, knowing children's friends, participating in recreational activities, and providing emotional encouragement. Such involvement can strengthen social bonds between parents and children. From a social control perspective, strong bonds with parents can increase adolescents' commitment to conventional values and reduce their willingness to engage in behaviours that could harm those relationships. Conversely, when parental involvement is weak, young people may experience limited attachment to conventional institutions and become more susceptible to alternative sources of influence. Mbugua's (2021) contribution therefore reinforces the argument that the quality and extent of parental involvement should be considered when explaining variations in juvenile delinquency among Kenyan adolescents.

The issue becomes particularly significant in Mombasa County, where social, economic, demographic, and urban conditions create a distinctive environment for examining juvenile delinquency. Mombasa is a major coastal urban centre characterized by a large and

diverse population, tourism, commercial activities, rapid urban development, and substantial movement of people. Like many rapidly changing urban areas, the county contains communities experiencing different levels of socioeconomic opportunity and vulnerability.

Adolescents may encounter challenges associated with unemployment and household economic pressures, school dropout, substance use, peer influence, exposure to crime, and limited recreational opportunities. Such circumstances may place additional pressure on families and affect parents' ability to provide consistent supervision and support. In households where parents work long or irregular hours, for example, adolescents may spend substantial periods without direct parental supervision. Where families experience economic hardship, parents may prioritize meeting basic material needs over spending time engaging with their children. These conditions make Mombasa County an important setting for investigating how parental support interacts with the broader social environment to influence juvenile delinquency.

The coastal context also makes the issue of parental support particularly important because adolescents' social experiences may extend beyond the immediate family and school environment. Mombasa's urban character provides young people with access to diverse social networks and opportunities, some of which may be positive while others may expose them to risky behaviours. Peer influence can become particularly significant when parental relationships are weak. Adolescents who do not receive adequate emotional support or supervision at home may seek recognition and belonging from peer groups. Where such groups normalize substance use, violence, theft, truancy, or other delinquent behaviours, adolescents may gradually adopt these behaviours. Strong parental relationships can serve as a countervailing influence by providing adolescents with alternative sources of identity, guidance, and social approval. Consequently, examining parental support in Mombasa County provides an opportunity to understand how family relationships may protect adolescents against or increase their vulnerability to delinquent behaviour within a complex urban environment.

Another important dimension of the problem concerns the changing nature of parent-child relationships. Adolescents increasingly interact through social media, mobile communication, and other digital platforms, which may make traditional forms of parental supervision more difficult. Parents may know where their children physically live or attend school but have limited knowledge of their online social networks and interactions. This does not mean that digital technologies directly cause juvenile delinquency; rather, they represent additional environments in which young people form relationships and encounter information and behavioural influences. Effective parental support in contemporary society therefore requires communication and trust that extend beyond physical supervision. Parents who maintain open relationships with their children may be better positioned to understand the challenges adolescents face both offline and online. This broader understanding of parental support is consistent with Beelmann and Klahr's (2022) emphasis on improving parenting practices as a means of strengthening children's behavioural and social development.

The reviewed literature also demonstrates that parental support is multidimensional and should not be reduced to a single concept such as financial provision. A parent may provide material resources but offer little emotional support, communication, or supervision. Similarly, a parent may monitor a child's activities closely but fail to create an environment in which the child feels respected and understood. Effective parental support is therefore likely to involve several complementary dimensions, including emotional warmth, communication, supervision, guidance, monitoring, encouragement, and participation in children's educational and social lives. Farrington et al. (2022), Ochieng and Omondi (2022), and Mbugua (2021)

collectively emphasize the protective importance of family support, monitoring, and involvement. These dimensions are relevant to the present study because they provide measurable aspects through which the influence of parental support on juvenile delinquency can be assessed among young people in Mombasa County.

Despite the considerable evidence linking family factors to juvenile delinquency, important gaps remain. Much of the international literature has examined parenting interventions and broad risk and protective factors, while African studies have frequently focused on particular countries or counties. Evidence from Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Nakuru, Kisumu, and Kenyan juvenile remand homes provides valuable insights, but findings from these settings cannot automatically explain the situation in Mombasa County. Mombasa possesses distinctive demographic, socioeconomic, cultural, and urban characteristics that may shape both parenting practices and adolescent behaviour. Furthermore, some studies emphasize family structure, while others focus on supervision, monitoring, or general parental involvement. There is therefore a need for a more focused examination of parental support as a multidimensional factor and its relationship with juvenile delinquency within the specific context of Mombasa County. The present study seeks to address this contextual gap by examining how parental support influences the likelihood of adolescents becoming involved in delinquent behaviour.

The relationship between parental support and juvenile delinquency has been a focal point of criminological and psychological research globally, with scholars attempting to decipher how family dynamics can either insulate adolescents from criminal behavior or propel them toward it. At the forefront of the theoretical discourse regarding this protective mechanism is the concept of parental support not merely as a static presence, but as an active mediator of behavioral outcomes. In a comprehensive study examining the intricacies of this relationship, Walters (2022) investigated the specific role parental support plays in mitigating delinquency among youth in the United States. The study focused on the interplay between an individual's low self-control, a well-established predictor of criminal behavior and the moderating influence of supportive parenting. Walters (2022) posited that while low self-control is a significant risk factor for offending, parental support functions as a crucial buffer that can disrupt the pathway between impulsivity and actual delinquent acts.

The findings suggest that when parents provide high levels of emotional and instrumental support, the negative effects of a youth's inability to regulate their behavior are significantly diminished. This research provides a vital theoretical framework for understanding juvenile delinquency, suggesting that the lack of support is not just a correlate of crime but a causal mechanism that interacts with psychological traits. However, while this model is robust within the Western context of the United States, it establishes a theoretical baseline that requires testing in diverse socio-cultural environments where family structures and support systems differ significantly from the Western nuclear family model.

Moving beyond the Western context to the African continent, the dynamics of family background and parental support take on different socio-economic and cultural dimensions, yet they remain central to understanding youth behavior. In Nigeria, Omede and Adekoya (2022) explored the influence of family background on juvenile delinquency, providing critical insights into how the breakdown of traditional support systems contributes to rising crime rates. Their research highlights that in many African settings, the family unit is under immense strain from economic instability and shifting social norms. Omede and Adekoya (2022) argue that juvenile delinquency is often a symptom of a dysfunctional family environment where parental support whether financial, emotional, or supervisory is lacking.

The study emphasizes that when the family structure disintegrates, due to factors such as divorce, parental neglect, or economic migration, the social control mechanism that the family represents fails, leaving adolescents vulnerable to negative peer influence and criminal tendencies. While this study offers a broad view of the Nigerian experience, it underscores a continental reality: the erosion of parental support is a primary driver of delinquency. However, the research tends to treat family background as a monolithic variable, often lacking the nuance to distinguish between different types of support or how they specifically interact with the immediate environment of the adolescent outside the home, creating a gap in understanding how these dynamics play out in specific regional contexts within Africa.

Focusing specifically on the East African region, Nyamhanga and Frumence (2022) conducted a cross-sectional study in Tanzania that further narrows the scope by examining the association between family factors and delinquency within the school setting. Their research analyzed various socio-demographic and family factors, placing particular emphasis on the level of parental support and monitoring as key determinants of adolescent behavior. Nyamhanga and Frumence (2022) found that students who perceived lower levels of parental support and monitoring were significantly more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors compared to their peers who reported strong family backing.

This study is pivotal because it connects the home environment to the school environment, suggesting that the absence of parental support permeates all aspects of an adolescent's life, increasing their vulnerability to deviance in public spaces like schools. The study corroborates the idea that parental monitoring acts as a form of social surveillance that deters potential offenders. However, while Nyamhanga and Frumence (2022) provide valuable regional data, their focus is on secondary school students who are still integrated into the formal education system. This leaves a gap regarding youth who are already outside the formal school system or those in high-risk urban environments where delinquency may be more prevalent and severe, a context that is highly relevant to neighboring Kenya.

Within the Kenyan context, the literature has begun to address these gaps by examining the causes of delinquency among youth who have already entered the justice system. Wanza (2020) conducted an assessment of the causes of juvenile delinquency specifically among youth in juvenile remand homes in Kenya. This study is particularly significant as it moves away from general population surveys to focus on youth for whom early interventions and parental support may have failed. Wanza (2020) identified that a significant proportion of juveniles in these facilities hailed from backgrounds characterized by familial neglect and a distinct lack of parental guidance. The research suggests that the trajectory to the remand home is often paved with instances where parents or guardians failed to provide the necessary emotional or financial support to keep the youth engaged in positive pursuits. While Wanza's (2020) findings are critical for understanding the "end result" of failed parental support, the study is broad in its national scope, covering youth from across various counties and regions. Consequently, it does not capture the unique cultural, economic, and environmental specificities of distinct regions, such as the coastal region, where the drivers of delinquency may be influenced by local factors like tourism, port activities, and distinct cultural norms that differ from the Kenyan heartland.

To further localize the understanding of these dynamics, scholars have turned their attention to specific Kenyan counties, revealing how local contexts influence the impact of family structure on delinquency. In Nakuru County, Nyambane and Mose (2021) investigated the impact of family structure on juvenile delinquency, finding a strong correlation between unstable family units and delinquent behavior. Their study highlighted that youth from single-parent households or those living with relatives often experienced lower levels of

effective parental support compared to those in intact nuclear families. Nyambane and Mose (2021) argue that the stressors associated with non-traditional family structures in Nakuru often lead to reduced supervision and emotional support, which in turn increases the likelihood of adolescents engaging in crime. This research provides a localized perspective, grounding the global theory of family support in the specific socio-economic reality of a Kenyan county. However, Nakuru is largely an inland agricultural and transport hub, and the socio-economic pressures faced by families there may not mirror those in coastal urban centers. The gap remains as to whether these findings regarding family structure can be generalized to Mombasa, where the cost of living, cultural diversity, and urbanization patterns present a different set of challenges for parental support.

Similarly, in the western region of Kenya, Ochieng and Omondi (2022) focused their research on Kisumu County, specifically examining the relationship between parental monitoring and juvenile delinquency among adolescents. Their study reinforces the idea that parental support is not merely emotional but is also operationalized through active monitoring and supervision. Ochieng and Omondi (2022) found that in Kisumu, lax parental monitoring was one of the strongest predictors of delinquency, as it afforded adolescents the unsupervised time to engage in deviant activities.

The study suggests that in urban Kenyan settings, the quality of parental support is often measured by the parent's ability to track the child's whereabouts and social interactions. While this offers a comparative perspective to the study in Nakuru, it again highlights a gap in the literature regarding the coastal region. Kisumu and Nakuru, while distinct, both share inland socio-economic characteristics. The literature reviewed spanning from the theoretical frameworks in the United States (Walters, 2022) to the specific county studies in Nigeria (Omede & Adekoya, 2022), Tanzania (Nyamhanga & Frumence, 2022), and the Kenyan counties of Nakuru (Nyambane & Mose, 2021) and Kisumu (Ochieng & Omondi, 2022) provides a robust foundation for understanding the link between family support and delinquency.

However, a critical research gap emerges when reviewing these works in relation to Mombasa County. While Wanza (2020) provides a national overview of juveniles in remand homes, there is a distinct lack of empirical studies focusing exclusively on Mombasa County, a region with unique socio-economic drivers including a high tourism turnover, port-city vulnerabilities, and distinct cultural dynamics regarding kinship and child-rearing. The studies from Nakuru and Kisumu offer valuable insights into family structure and monitoring, but they fail to account for the specific coastal context where delinquency may be driven by different economic survival mechanisms unique to Mombasa.

Furthermore, while Walters (2022) offers a mediation model linking support to self-control, and Nyamhanga and Frumence (2022) highlight the importance of monitoring in schools, no study has synthesized these variables to test how parental support specifically mediates delinquency within the informal settlements and urban centers of Mombasa. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a study that applies the established theoretical importance of parental support to the specific, under-researched context of Mombasa County, to determine if the protective effects observed globally and in other Kenyan regions hold true in this unique environment.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The study was based on Social Control Theory and Social Learning Theory, which together offer a complete understanding of how parental influences affect juvenile delinquency. According to Hirschi (1969), Social Control Theory is the result of bad or poor attachment to

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society that leads an individual to engage in delinquent behaviour. The theory suggests that well developed social bonds inhibit people from their delinquency and poorly developed or no bonds do the same by highly increasing chances of deviant behaviour. Hirschi has defined four main aspects of social bonds as attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Within the framework of the current research, the term attachment can be used to mean the emotional attachment between the parent and adolescents.

An effective parental attachment whereby warmth, guidance and constant discipline are reflected deter delinquent behaviour. Commitment is associated with the investment in traditional activities, e.g. education, which is reinforced by parental education and financial assistance. Involvement is an attendance to structured and supervised activities which are promoted through parental monitoring. Belief is the acknowledgment of friends and values that are practiced in society, and this is to a great extent influenced by the moral direction of parents. Social Control Theory applies to this research since it shows how the lack of parental supervision, poor morality and parental involvement lead to a lack of attachment of the adolescents to the traditional social institutions making them more prone to delinquent behaviour. The theory is also applicable in the Mombasa County, where socio-economic pressures could undermine the ability of parents to enlarge the parental capacity to explain differences in juvenile delinquency.

The Social Learning Theory, which was developed by Bandura (1977), focuses on learning behaviour through observation, imitation and reinforcement. The theory holds that adolescents learn behaviours through observation of significant other people, especially their parents and peers (Bandura, 1977). Rewarded and unpunished behaviours have higher chances of repetition (Bandura, 1977). In the family setting, parents play the most important role models. Young people who experience positive parental behaviour, good discipline and moral teachings have chances of adopting pro social behaviours.

On the other hand, when they are exposed to irregular discipline, neglect, or antisocial behaviour, the chances of acquiring delinquency are high. Social Learning Theory also places the emphasis on peer influence and in particular where parental supervision is low peer delinquency behaviours are learned and reinforced. This theory is especially applicable in modern contexts whereby technology and social media expose adolescents to many behaviours out of the home setting. Monitoring technology can thus diminish the exposure to delinquent models and exposure to learning deviant behaviour by the parents.

1.4 Methodology

This study adopted an analytical cross-sectional mixed-methods research design. The analytical cross-sectional design is appropriate because it enables the researcher not only to describe the prevalence and patterns of juvenile delinquency among adolescents aged 13–17 years, but also to examine the statistical relationships between parental factors and juvenile delinquency at a specific point in time. The design facilitated the assessment of associations between parental moral guidance, educational support, financial support, parental monitoring of technology use, and juvenile delinquency, while also examining the moderating effects of poverty and peer pressure.

A mixed-methods approach was employed to combine quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to adolescents and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. Qualitative data was collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions to provide deeper insights into parental practices, adolescent experiences, and community perspectives regarding juvenile delinquency.

The research investigated the association between parental variables and juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Mombasa County between the age of 13-17 years. Parental factors are the independent variable, juvenile delinquency is the dependent variable and poverty, and peer pressure are the moderating variables.

This research was carried out in Mombasa County, which is within the Kenyan Coast within latitude of about 4.0435 0 S and the longitude of 39.6682 0 E. The second-largest urban center in Kenya is Mombasa, which is a major economic center owing to the Port of Mombasa, tourism, and a high economy of the informal sector. The county occupies about 219.9 square kilometres, and it has six sub-counties namely Mvita, Changamwe, Jomvu, Kisauni, Nyali, and Likoni.

The population of the Mombasa County, according to the Kenya Population and Housing Census of 2019 is 1,208,333, which includes 610,257 men and 598,046 women (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019). The population aged under 15 is approximately one-third of the population, which means that the number of children and adolescents will be significant to this study (KNBS, 2019). High urban density is presented by the average household size of about 3.1 persons (KNBS, 2019).

The study applied specific exclusion criteria to ensure that only appropriate and eligible participants were involved in the research. Adolescents below 13 years or above 17 years were excluded because they fall outside the defined age bracket for the study. In addition, adolescents whose parents or guardians did not provide consent, as well as those who personally decline to give assent, were not included in the study in order to uphold ethical research standards. The study also excluded respondents who are not residents of Likoni Sub-County, since the research was specifically focused on this geographical area. Furthermore, individuals who were unable to participate effectively due to serious illness or communication limitations were also excluded to ensure the quality and reliability of the data collected.

The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique that combines both purposive and probability sampling methods to ensure comprehensive representation of the study population. Purposive sampling was used to select Likoni Sub-County as the study area due to its relevance to the research objectives and the presence of reported cases related to juvenile delinquency. In addition, purposive sampling was applied in selecting key informants such as probation officers, children's officers, NGO representatives, police officers, and National Government Administrative Officers (NGAOs), since these participants possessed specialized knowledge and practical experience in matters related to juvenile behaviour, parenting practices, and child protection. This approach ensured that rich and relevant qualitative data was obtained from individuals directly involved in addressing juvenile delinquency.

The sample size for adolescent respondents was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for estimating proportions in large populations. This formula is appropriate because the estimated population of adolescents aged 13–17 years in Likoni Sub-County (20,000–24,000) exceeds 10,000 and can therefore be treated as large.

The formula is:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n_0= Initial sample size
- Z= Z-score corresponding to 95% confidence level (1.96)

- p= Estimated prevalence of juvenile delinquency
- q= 1 − p
- e= Margin of error

Based on available Kenyan child protection and urban youth reports, the estimated prevalence of juvenile delinquency among urban adolescents is approximately **30% (p = 0.30)**.

To ensure that the data collected by the study was quantitative and qualitative, the study employed the use of structured questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussion guides since the mixed-methods design requires both quantitative and qualitative data.

Adolescents aged between 13 and 17 years were used to complete the structured questionnaires to get standardized quantitative information on parental moral guidance, educational support, financial support, monitoring technology use, peer influence, poverty, and delinquent behaviour. Likert-scale items were used in the questionnaire to give the opportunity to perform statistical analysis using correlation and regression methods.

Qualitative data was collected using interview guides among parents, teachers, probation officers, police officers, NGO representatives and National Government Administrative Officers. These instruments offered more contextual descriptions concerning the impacts of parents and trends of juvenile delinquency.

The guides of focus group discussion provoked mutual experiences of stakeholders who deal with adolescents. FGDs were used when it came to studying community perceptions and interventions.

A pilot study was conducted in Kisauni Sub-County, which was outside the main study area, to help pre-test the research instruments before the actual data collection began. The pilot sample comprised approximately 10 percent of the total study sample size, which was considered adequate for testing the effectiveness and suitability of the research tools. Conducting the pilot study in a different but comparable area helped minimize bias while allowing the researcher to make necessary adjustments to the instruments and procedures.

Content validity of the research instruments was ensured through expert review by the study supervisor and specialists from the department. These experts carefully examined the questionnaires, interview guides, and focus group discussion guides to determine whether the items adequately cover the study objectives and relevant variables such as parental factors, peer pressure, poverty, and juvenile delinquent behaviour. Their feedback and recommendations were used to refine the instruments to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the content before data collection begins. This process helped to improve the accuracy and suitability of the tools for the study. Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to determine reliability of the questionnaire with a set of 0.70 as the acceptable level of reliability.

Data collection was conducted using structured questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Given that adolescents are a vulnerable population, specific measures were implemented to minimize bias and ensure the collection of accurate and reliable information.

The quantitative data was coded and analyzed with the help of SPSS version 26. It was in the form of descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) and inferential statistics (correlation and multiple regression).

Thematic analysis was used to develop and analyze qualitative data such as interviews and FGDs. This entailed transcription, coding, categorization and thematic identification in connection with the study objectives.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant Institutional Ethics Review Committee before commencement of data collection. Permission to conduct the study was also sought from relevant national and county authorities.

1.5 Discussion and Analysis

(a) Influence of Parental Support on Juvenile Delinquency

The second objective of the study sought to assess the influence of parental support on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Mombasa County. Parental support was conceptualized as both educational and financial support, including parents' involvement in monitoring academic progress, attending school meetings, providing learning materials, paying school fees, and meeting adolescents' basic needs. These aspects were examined to determine their contribution to reducing or increasing the likelihood of juvenile delinquency.

(b) Descriptive Analysis of Parental Support and Juvenile Delinquency

Table 4.7 and Table 4.8 present respondents' perceptions of various dimensions of parental support.

Regarding ensuring regular school attendance, 46.8% agreed and 10.8% strongly agreed, while 27.6% disagreed and 7.9% strongly disagreed. Similarly, 47.1% agreed and 12.6% strongly agreed that their parents check academic performance. For attending school meetings, 46.6% agreed and 11.3% strongly agreed. Encouragement to do well in school was acknowledged by 47.4% (agree) and 13.9% (strongly agree). Provision of learning materials showed 45.0% agreement and 13.4% strong agreement. These findings indicate moderate to high levels of educational support in many households, though a notable proportion (around 25–35%) reported inadequate engagement in these areas. Perceptions of financial support were more mixed. While 47.4% agreed and 13.2% strongly agreed that their parents provide basic needs (food, clothing, shelter), a substantial 45.0% disagreed that school fees are paid on time. Financial problems affecting behavior were widely reported, with 36.6% agreeing and 28.9% strongly agreeing. Similarly, 36.6% agreed and 43.4% strongly agreed that they sometimes lack school materials due to financial problems.

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Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics of Educational Support Indicators

Variables	**n**	**%**
My parents ensure I attend school regularly		
Strongly Disagree	30	7.9
Disagree	105	27.6
Neutral	26	6.8
Agree	178	46.8
Strongly Agree	41	10.8
My parents check my academic performance		
Strongly Disagree	32	8.4
Disagree	106	27.9
Neutral	15	3.9
Agree	179	47.1
Strongly Agree	48	12.6
My parents attend school meetings when required		
Strongly Disagree	34	8.9
Disagree	114	30.0
Neutral	12	3.2
Agree	177	46.6
Strongly Agree	43	11.3
My parents encourage me to do well in school		
Strongly Disagree	29	7.6
Disagree	106	27.9
Neutral	12	3.2
Agree	180	47.4
Strongly Agree	53	13.9
My parent provides learning materials when needed		
Strongly Disagree	30	7.9
Disagree	110	28.9
Neutral	18	4.7
Agree	171	45.0
Strongly Agree	51	13.4

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Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics of Financial Support Indicators

Variables	n	%
My parents provide my basic needs (food, clothing, shelter)		
Strongly Disagree	30	7.9
Disagree	106	27.9
Neutral	14	3.7
Agree	180	47.4
Strongly Agree	50	13.2
School fees are paid on time		
Strongly Disagree	31	8.2
Disagree	171	45.0
Neutral	33	8.7
Agree	104	27.4
Strongly Agree	41	10.8
Financial problems in my family affect my behavior		
Strongly Disagree	14	3.7
Disagree	73	19.2
Neutral	44	11.6
Agree	139	36.6
Strongly Agree	110	28.9
I sometimes lack school materials due to financial problems		
Strongly Disagree	12	3.2
Disagree	47	12.4
Neutral	17	4.5
Agree	139	36.6
Strongly Agree	165	43.4

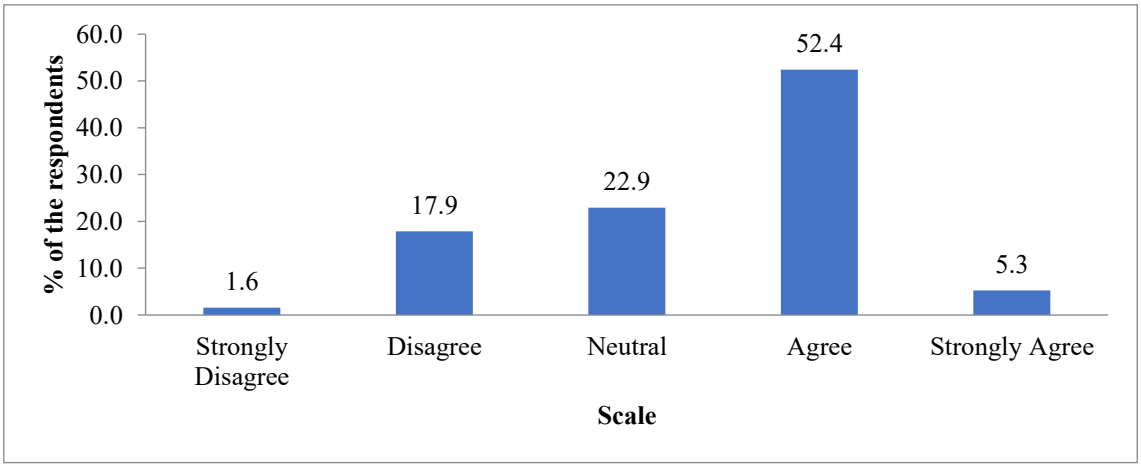


Figure 4.2: Parental support composite score

Figure4.2 shows the overall level of parental support received by adolescents in Mombasa County. The findings indicate that most respondents agreed (52.4%) that they received parental support, while 5.3% strongly agreed. In contrast, 17.9% disagreed and 1.6% strongly disagreed, whereas 22.9% remained neutral.

(c) Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of Specific Indicators of Parental Support and Juvenile Delinquency

Table 4.9 and 4.10 presents the associations between educational support indicators and juvenile delinquency.

Adolescents whose parents strongly disagreed that they ensure regular school attendance had substantially higher odds of engaging in delinquent behaviors (OR = 37.06, 95% CI: 4.60–298.61, p = 0.001), with 96.7% of this group reporting delinquent behavior sometimes or often. The Disagree category also showed significantly elevated risk (OR = 5.43, 95% CI: 2.47–11.92, p < 0.001), where 81.0% reported delinquency. Neutral responses were not significant (OR = 2.04, p = 0.162). Agree responses had lower odds than the reference (OR = 0.74, p = 0.381).

On whether parent checks my academic performance, respondents who strongly disagree (96.9%) were associated with extremely high odds of engaging in delinquent behaviors (OR = 56.53, 95% CI: 7.08–451.28, p < 0.001). Disagree (88.7%) responses also showed strong risk (OR = 14.28, 95% CI: 6.15–33.19, p < 0.001) compared to those who strongly agreed.

Similar patterns emerged for respondents who Strongly Disagree (94.1%) that their parents attend school meetings as needed (OR = 22.22, 95% CI: 4.71–104.88, p < 0.001) and encouraging good performance in school (Strongly Disagree OR = 59.29, 95% CI: 7.43–472.90, p < 0.001; 96.6% delinquent). Provision of learning materials followed suit, with Strongly Disagree showing the highest risk (OR = 69.60, 95% CI: 8.67–558.49, p < 0.001; 96.7% delinquent).

Provision of basic needs revealed strong associations: Strongly Disagree (OR = 67.67, 95% CI: 8.43–543.38, p < 0.001; 96.7% delinquent) and Disagree (OR = 14.16, 95% CI: 6.27–31.98, p < 0.001; 85.8% delinquent). School fees paid on time showed parallel results (Strongly Disagree OR = 52.00, p < 0.001).

Financial problems affecting behavior displayed an inverse relationship. Strongly Agree responses (highest perceived problems) were linked to the highest delinquency prevalence (73.6%), serving as the reference, while lower agreement categories were protective (e.g., Strongly Disagree OR = 0.14, 95% CI: 0.04–0.49, p = 0.002).

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Table 4.4: Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of Educational Support Indicators and Juvenile Delinquency

	Sometimes/Often		Never/Rarely			95%CI		
Variables	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**OR**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**P-Value**
My parents ensure I attend school regularly								
Strongly Disagree	29	96.7%	1	3.3%	37.06	4.60	298.61	**0.001**
Disagree	85	81.0%	20	19.0%	5.43	2.47	11.92	**<0.001**
Neutral	16	61.5%	10	38.5%	2.04	0.75	5.57	0.162
Agree	65	36.5%	113	63.5%	0.74	0.37	1.46	0.381
Strongly Agree	18	43.9%	23	56.1%	Ref			
My parents check my academic performance								
Strongly Disagree	31	96.9%	1	3.1%	56.53	7.08	451.28	**<0.001**
Disagree	94	88.7%	12	11.3%	14.28	6.15	33.19	**<0.001**
Neutral	10	66.7%	5	33.3%	3.65	1.07	12.42	**0.039**
Agree	61	34.1%	118	65.9%	0.94	0.48	1.84	0.862
Strongly Agree	17	35.4%	31	64.6%	Ref			
My parents attend school meetings when required								
Strongly Disagree	32	94.1%	2	5.9%	22.22	4.71	104.88	**<0.001**
Disagree	92	80.7%	22	19.3%	5.81	2.71	12.47	**<0.001**
Neutral	7	58.3%	5	41.7%	1.94	0.53	7.12	0.315
Agree	64	36.2%	113	63.8%	0.79	0.40	1.55	0.488
Strongly Agree	18	41.9%	25	58.1%	Ref			
My parents encourage me to do well in school								
Strongly Disagree	28	96.6%	1	3.4%	59.29	7.43	472.90	**<0.001**
Disagree	92	86.8%	14	13.2%	13.92	6.22	31.14	**<0.001**
Neutral	10	83.3%	2	16.7%	10.59	2.09	53.72	**0.004**
Agree	66	36.7%	114	63.3%	1.23	0.64	2.35	0.540
Strongly Agree	17	32.1%	36	67.9%	Ref			
My parents provide learning materials when needed								
Strongly Disagree	29	96.7%	1	3.3%	69.60	8.67	558.49	**<0.001**
Disagree	91	82.7%	19	17.3%	11.49	5.27	25.06	**<0.001**
Neutral	12	66.7%	6	33.3%	4.80	1.52	15.16	**0.008**
Agree	66	38.6%	105	61.4%	1.51	0.77	2.97	0.234
Strongly Agree	15	29.4%	36	70.6%	Ref			

OR = Odds Ratio, CI = Confidence Interval, Ref = Reference, P–Value = Probability value

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Table 4.5: Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of Financial Support Indicators and Juvenile Delinquency

	Sometimes/Often		**Never/Rarely**			**95%CI**		
Variables	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**OR**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**P-Value**
My parents provide my basic needs (food, clothing, shelter)								
Strongly Disagree	29	96.7%	1	3.3%	67.67	8.43	543.38	**<0.001**
Disagree	91	85.8%	15	14.2%	14.16	6.27	31.98	**<0.001**
Neutral	8	57.1%	6	42.9%	3.11	0.92	10.53	0.068
Agree	70	38.9%	110	61.1%	1.48	0.76	2.92	0.251
Strongly Agree	15	30.0%	35	70.0%	Ref			
School fees are paid on time								
Strongly Disagree	30	96.8%	1	3.2%	52.00	6.42	420.94	**<0.001**
Disagree	109	63.7%	62	36.3%	3.05	1.50	6.18	**0.002**
Neutral	10	30.3%	23	69.7%	0.75	0.28	2.00	0.571
Agree	49	47.1%	55	52.9%	1.54	0.73	3.25	0.252
Strongly Agree	15	36.6%	26	63.4%	Ref			
Financial problems in my family affect my behavior								
Strongly Disagree	4	28.6%	10	71.4%	0.14	0.04	0.49	**0.002**
Disagree	36	49.3%	37	50.7%	0.35	0.19	0.65	**0.001**
Neutral	13	29.5%	31	70.5%	0.15	0.07	0.33	**<0.001**
Agree	79	56.8%	60	43.2%	0.47	0.27	0.81	**0.006**
Strongly Agree	81	73.6%	29	26.4%	Ref			
I sometimes lack school materials due to financial problems								
Strongly Disagree	5	41.7%	7	58.3%	0.37	0.11	1.21	0.099
Disagree	32	68.1%	15	31.9%	1.10	0.55	2.19	0.795
Neutral	4	23.5%	13	76.5%	0.16	0.05	0.51	**0.002**
Agree	63	45.3%	76	54.7%	0.43	0.27	0.68	**<0.001**
Strongly Agree	109	66.1%	56	33.9%	Ref			
OR = Odds Ratio, CI = Confidence Interval, Ref = Reference, P–Value = Probability value								

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(d) Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of the Composite Parental Support Score on Juvenile Delinquency

Table 4.11 presents the association between the composite parental support score and juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Mombasa County. The analysis was conducted using binary logistic regression, comparing respondents who reported engaging in delinquent behaviors sometimes or often with those who reported never or rarely engaging in such behaviors.

Adolescents with the lowest composite scores (Disagree) were significantly more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors (OR = 9.29, 95% CI: 2.07–41.67, p = 0.004), with 95.6% of this group reporting delinquency sometimes or often. In contrast, adolescents in the Agree category had substantially lower odds of delinquency compared to those who strongly agree (OR = 0.21, 95% CI: 0.08–0.58, p = 0.002), with only 33.2% reporting delinquent behaviors sometimes or often.

Table 4.6: Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of the Composite Parental Support Score and Juvenile Delinquency

	Sometimes/Often		Never/Rarely			95%CI		
Variables	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**OR**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**P-Value**
Parental support score								
Strongly Disagree	5	83.3%	1	16.7%	2.14	0.20	22.48	0.525
Disagree	65	95.6%	3	4.4%	9.29	2.07	41.67	**0.004**
Neutral	63	72.4%	24	27.6%	1.13	0.39	3.27	0.829
Agree	66	33.2%	133	66.8%	0.21	0.08	0.58	**0.002**
Strongly Agree	14	70.0%	6	30.0%	Ref			
OR = Odds Ratio, CI = Confidence Interval, Ref = Reference, P–Value = Probability value								

Source: Field Data 2026

(e) Discussion of the Influence of Parental Support on Juvenile Delinquency

The results reveal that there is a high level of significance between parent support and juvenile delinquency among adolescents in Mombasa County. Parents who actively involve themselves in their children's learning, contribute learning materials, provide basic necessities, and have regular contact with school-related activities, have a lower risk of their children engaging in delinquent behaviour. However, low levels of parental support can contribute to a weaker bond with school and family, which in turn can make adolescents more susceptible to negative peer pressure, school drop-out, drug and alcohol abuse, and other forms of delinquency.

The results of this study were consistent with Social Control Theory (Hirschi, 1969) that posits that a strong bond to conventional social institutions, such as the family and school, would decrease a young person's chances of engaging in delinquent acts. Parent involvement in education helps to reinforce positive behaviours and builds adolescents' motivation to succeed in school. The results also relate to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) that states that parent's model positive behaviours to their adolescents and encourage, reinforce, and interact with them continuously. Adolescents are more likely to adopt positive social norms and defy negative influences when parents are interested in their education and wellbeing.

The present results corresponded with more recent empirical results. Beelmann and Klahr (2022) found that parenting interventions that increase positive parenting practices and parental involvement are effective in decreasing adolescent behavioural problems and delinquent behaviour. Likewise, Cardona-Isaza and Trujillo-Cano (2023) concluded that parental educational involvement is one of the most powerful family level risk factors against youth delinquency in different socio-economic contexts. They found that adolescents whose parents were on top of their educational progress and supported their schooling were found to have higher school attachment and lower involvement in antisocial behaviour.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, UNESCO (2023) noted that low parental engagement in education negatively affects children's learning outcomes, school retention and enrollment rates, as well as adolescent risky behaviours. Similarly, Marenyenye (2023) reported that externalizing behaviours in adolescent delinquency were significantly lower for those growing up in family environments where parents actively engaged in youths' education. Mwanza (2024) further noted that low educational and financial support from parents also significantly contributed to exposing adolescents to criminal peers, in informal settlements in Kenya.

The findings also indicated that financial support is an effective measure alongside educative support to curb delinquency among youths. Failing to provide adequate education and basic services to adolescents could inadvertently cause adolescents to be vulnerable to economic pressures that lead them to involve in theft, drug trafficking, school dropout and participation in gangs. The findings show that sustained parental involvement in education is even protective in low-income families, a structural challenge posed by poverty.

These findings have important implications for policy and practice in Mombasa County. Juvenile delinquencies prevention programs should enhance parents' ability to provide a supportive environment for their adolescent students, both academically and financially. Parents' participation in the school should be increased by increasing the frequency of parent–teacher contact, and the number of social protection programmes, both county and national, that decrease economic hardship among families. Community-based programs fostering positive parenting practices can also contribute to increased family resilience and decrease adolescents' exposure to delinquent environments.

1.6 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that parental support, particularly educational and financial support, is significantly related to juvenile delinquency. Adolescents with less supportive involvement of their parents/guardians in their education and those with poor parents in providing basic needs for their learning were more likely to report delinquent behaviours. The results underscore the need to keep adolescents engaged in the mainstream of socialization, such as in the school context. The results also provide evidence that the ability to provide support may be related to the economic situation of the family, which suggests that interventions that focus on adolescent delinquency should take into account family practices and conditions under which families provide support.

1.7 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings demonstrating that the absence of parental educational and financial support drastically increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency with adolescents lacking basic needs and school materials exhibiting odds ratios as high as 69.60 it is recommended that the Mombasa County government, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and local NGOs, implement a comprehensive "Family Resilience and School

Engagement Initiative." This intervention should prioritize a dual approach that simultaneously addresses the economic vulnerabilities identified as key drivers of delinquency while actively enhancing parental monitoring. Specifically, the program should establish targeted social safety nets, such as conditional cash transfers or subsidized bursaries for learning materials, to alleviate the financial strain that forces youth into criminal activities. Concurrently, schools must be mandated and resourced to facilitate higher levels of parental involvement through regular academic monitoring workshops and parent-teacher meetings, thereby strengthening the social bonds and supervision mechanisms that the research confirms are critical for insulating adolescents against deviant behavior.

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