# EFFECTS OF STUDENT WELLBEING ON THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN KENYAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES. A CASE STUDY OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY (KU).

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## DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university

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This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my parents; Mr. Charles Cherono and Mrs. Doris Kerich, Mercy and Claire for their ever-growing support in my life especially during the study of this research.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

**KU** Kenyatta University

**GPA.** Grade Point Average

**MUA**. Management University of Africa

**SDT.** Self Determination Theory

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Peer Pressure** -Peer pressure is the influence from peers that affects a student's attitudes, decisions, and behavior.
(Mentally Healthy Schools, 2024)

**Mental and Physical Health** Mental health refers to emotional and psychological well-being, while physical health relates to bodily fitness and absence of disease.
(World Health Organization, 2020)

**Social Support** Social support is the perception or experience of receiving emotional, academic, or practical help from family, friends, or institutions.
(Taylor, 2011)

**University Policies** University policies are formal rules and regulations that guide academic and social conduct within the university setting.
(Altbach, 2015)

**Academic Performance** Academic performance is the level of achievement in studies, measured by grades, test scores, and participation in academic tasks.
(York et al., 2015)

**Grade Point Average (GPA)** GPA is a standardized numerical measure of a student's overall academic achievement across courses.
(Brookhart et al., 2016)

## ABSTRACT

The transition rate to universities in Kenya remained alarmingly low despite significant investments in education, with only about 15% of students from both parallel and school-based programs made the transition. The study investigated the multifaceted factors influenced the wellbeing of students in Kenyan universities, including academic, social, environmental, and economic aspects. Academic pressure, inadequate resources, and outdated curriculum contributed to stress and mental health issues, while social factors such as peer relationships, societal expectations, and cultural differences affected emotional wellbeing. Economic challenges, lack of access to basic needs, and campus safety concerns further impacted overall health and happiness. Understanding and addressing these issues are crucial for promoting a positive university experience and enhancing student wellbeing. The research aimed to identify how peer pressure, university policies, spiritual support, and participation in associations and clubs influence student wellbeing in Kenyan universities, providing valuable insights for universities' administrations to address these complex dynamics and support students effectively. The study employed descriptive research design comprising of both qualitative research techniques. Data were collected from primary sources with questionnaires.

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0. Introduction

The transition rate to universities in Kenya stands at a concerning 15% for students from both parallel and school-based programs, raising questions about the effectiveness of investments in education. The wellbeing of students in Kenyan public universities are influenced by a myriad of factors spanning academic, social, environmental, and economic realms. Academic pressures, including inadequate resources and outdated curriculum, contribute to heightened stress levels and mental health challenges among students. Additionally, social factors such as peer relationships, societal expectations, and cultural differences significantly affect students' emotional wellbeing. Moreover, economic challenges, lack of access to basic needs, and concerns about campus safety further exacerbate issues affecting students' overall health and happiness.

Understanding and addressing these multifaceted issues are paramount for fostering a positive university experience and enhancing the wellbeing of students in Kenya. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of student wellbeing on their academic performance in Kenyan public universities case study of Kenyatta University, focusing on peer pressure, university policies, mental and physical health and social support. By exploring these impacts, the research seeks to provide valuable insights for universities' administrations to address the intricate dynamics of student mental, emotional, and physical states effectively. Ultimately, this research contributes to the overarching mission of universities in facilitating the growth and success of individuals in a comprehensive and meaningful manner.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

The well-being of university students is a critical aspect of their academic success and overall development. In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the various impacts of student well-being on their academic performance in higher education institutions globally and locally. In Kenya, universities have experienced significant changes, including increased enrollment, diverse student populations, and evolving educational demands. These changes have brought about new challenges that affect students' mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. (Mutie, 2023).

Kenyatta University, one of Kenya's leading public universities, has not been immune to these challenges. Factors such as academic pressure, financial constraints, social relationship, and living conditions have been identified as significant contributors to student well-being (Chepkener, 2018). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues, leading to increased mental distress among students (Mutie, 2023).

In Kenya university context, the transition from secondary education to higher education often involves significant changes in student's lives, including adapting to new environments, managing academic pressure, and balancing personal responsibilities. These factors can have a profound impact on their emotional, psychological, and physical well-being. Previous studies have shown that academic stress, financial challenges, and limited social support networks are primarily factors that influence students' mental health overall well-being (Makori & Kiptoo, 2019).

The growing concern for students' well-being in Kenyan universities has led to increased calls for universities to provide more comprehensive student support services and create

environments conducive to the overall well-being of the students on their academic performance (Omondi, 2021). However, there is still limited empirical research that explores the specific impact of student well-being on their academic performance.

Economic challenges and lack of access to basic needs further compound the issues faced by students, affecting their overall health and happiness. Additionally, concerns regarding campus safety contribute to a sense of insecurity among students, potentially exacerbating their stress levels and diminishing their overall wellbeing.

### 1.2. Statement of the problem

The well-being of students in Kenyan public universities is an emerging concern that has yet to be thoroughly explored in academic literature. Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of student well-being, there is insufficient data on the specific impacts affecting it in the Kenyan context. Students in Kenyan public universities face unique challenges, including academic pressure, financial stress, limited mental health services, and social isolation, which may significantly affect their well- being on academic performances. Moreover, the transition to university life can be overwhelming for many students, leading to anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns that often go unaddressed due to the stigma surrounding mental issues in the country (Ngugi, 2020).

The problem is further compounded by the lack of adequate support systems and resources to address these challenges. Many students at Kenyatta University struggle with issues such academic stress, financial difficulties, inadequate accommodation, and limited access to mental health services (Chepkener, 2018&Kiboly, 2019). These factors not only affect their academic

performance but also their academic performance but also their overall quality of life and future prospects.

This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the impact of student wellbeing on their academic performance in Kenyan Public Universities, focusing on academic, social, financial, and psychological factors. The findings will be crucial for developing interventions that promote a supportive academic environment and improve the overall well-being of university students in Kenya.

### 1.3. Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

i To determine how peer pressure influence the academic performance of students in Kenyan public universities

ii How does universities policies impact on student wellbeing on their academic performance in Kenyan public universities

iii To evaluate the influence of mental and physical health (including stress, anxiety, and depression) on the academic performance of students in public Kenyan universities.

iv To examine the role of social support (family, peers, and university services) in enhancing student well-being and academic performance in public Kenyan universities.

### 1.4. Research Questions

i. How does mental health (stress, anxiety, depression) and physical health affect the academic performance of students in public Kenyan universities?

ii. How does peer pressure impact student wellbeing on their academic performance in Kenyan public universities?

iii. To what extent does university policy affect the students' wellbeing on their academic performance in Kenyan public universities?

iv. What role does social support (from family, peers, and university services) play in enhancing student well-being and academic performance in public Kenyan universities?

### 1.5. Significance of the study

This study is important since it examines different factors that affect the wellbeing of students in Kenyan universities especially Kenyatta University.

The study is important to universities administration as far as addressing the issues of student's wellbeing on their academic performance in universities, which is how to address peer pressure and university policies by delving into the intricate dynamics of students mental, emotional and physical states.

This research provides valuable insights into the Interplay between wellbeing and academic performance. Ultimately, the study is integral to the mission of universities, facilitating the growth and success of individuals in a comprehensive and meaningful manner.

### 1.6. Scope of the study

The scope of this study is focused on investigating the impact of student well-being on academic performance, specifically within Kenyatta University, a prominent public university in Kenya. The study will be conducted at Kenyatta University, located in Kiambu County, Kenya. As one of the largest public universities in the country, it provides a representative sample of the general student population in Kenyan public universities.

The study will target undergraduate students enrolled at Kenyatta University during the 2025 academic year. Students from different academic disciplines (e.g., social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, business.) and years of study (freshmen to final-year students) will be included to ensure a diverse and comprehensive representation of the student body. The conceptual scope will deal with student well-being which includes mental health, physical health and financial wellbeing and academic performance which deals with Grade Point Average (GPA), course completion rates and examination results.

### 1.7. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, it is organized in six sections. The chapter provided a background of the study in relation to the factors affecting student well-being in Kenyan universities. The statement of the problem that establishes the reason for the study, the objectives offer the reasons in which the whole research is done, the scope identifies the coverage area of study and the significances of the study.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.0. Introduction

“The literature review provides the reader with an explanation of the theological logic of the problem that is about to become extinct, how it has done and how they relate the results to the current problem. The literature has been revised on the basis of work documents, magazines, books, reports and internet sources. The theoretical review and critical analysis and research gaps are hereby discussed.

## 2.1. Theoretical Literature Review

A theory is an organized interlinked idea that explain a given subject matter and provides a framework for explanation of observations based on assumptions following hypotheses. This section shall be carried out based on these two theories, namely;

### 2.1.1. Constructivism theory

Constructivism theory, initially proposed by Jean Piaget, emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals as they interact with their environment and experiences. Piaget's theory asserts that learners are not passive recipients of information but rather active participants in shaping their understanding of the world. As students engage with their surroundings, they continuously revise their cognitive structures based on their experiences, which ultimately contribute to their learning process and overall development (Piaget, 1973). This theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction, problem-solving, and the active construction of knowledge, which are key aspects of a student's well-being.

Academic challenges are a significant factor affecting student well-being. In Kenyan universities, students are often faced with heavy workloads, competitive grading systems, and high expectations. From a constructivist perspective, how students cope with academic pressures depends on their cognitive development and how they process and integrate new information (Piaget, 1973). Students in the formal operational stage (Piaget) are better equipped to manage academic stress due to their ability to think critically and reason abstractly. However, those at earlier cognitive stages might struggle with complex academic tasks, potentially leading to anxiety, frustration, and a negative impact on their mental health (Dixon & Wood, 2018).

Social interactions play a key role in student well-being. Peer pressure, especially in the university setting, is an important factor that influences students' mental health. Constructivist theory emphasizes the role of social interactions in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). In the Kenyan university context, peer pressure can be both positive and negative. Positive peer influence can motivate students to perform better academically, engage in healthy behaviors, and participate in extracurricular activities, which enhances their well-being (Nguyen & Williams, 2021). On the other hand, negative peer pressure can lead to risky behaviors such as substance abuse, which can adversely affect students' mental health (Larcombe, 2021).

According to constructivism, students learn and construct meaning from their interactions with peers. Therefore, students who are able to form positive, supportive relationships with their peers are more likely to experience improved well-being. This highlights the importance of creating opportunities for collaborative learning and social support networks within universities.

A student’s family background and socioeconomic status can significantly influence their well-being in university. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face financial constraints, which can cause stress and hinder academic performance. From a constructivist perspective,

students' prior experiences shape how they approach new challenges. Students from wealthier families may have more access to resources such as private tutors, extracurricular activities, and social networks, which can provide them with an advantage in terms of both academic success and overall well-being. In contrast, students from less affluent families may struggle to meet basic needs, which can contribute to feelings of insecurity or low self-esteem (Brown & Smith, 2020).

### 2.1.2 Piaget's theory of Cognitive development

Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development provides a valuable framework for understanding how students' cognitive abilities and their stages of cognitive development may influence their well-being and academic performance in university settings. According to Piaget (1973), cognitive development occurs through distinct stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational, each representing different levels of reasoning and understanding. As students' progress through these stages, their ability to process information and respond to challenges evolves, which directly impacts their ability to manage academic demands and social interactions in university life.

In the formal operational stage, which typically begins in adolescence, individuals develop the ability to engage in abstract thinking, logical reasoning, and hypothetical problem-solving. For university students, this stage allows them to handle complex academic tasks, critically assess their learning, and make informed decisions about their studies and social life (Dixon & Wood, 2018). Students in the formal operational stage can better evaluate abstract concepts such as peer pressure, academic stress, or social dynamics, and they are more likely to use effective coping strategies, leading to enhanced well-being and academic performance. For instance, a student in this stage might be able to critically assess the potential consequences of procrastination and

make better decisions to manage their time effectively, reducing stress and improving academic outcomes.

However, Piaget's theory also highlights that students may be at different stages of cognitive development, and this variation can influence their ability to navigate the complexities of university life. While some students may have reached the formal operational stage, others might still be in earlier stages of cognitive development. Those who have not yet fully developed abstract reasoning may find it difficult to manage the complexities of university life, leading to challenges in both academic and social settings. For example, a student in the concrete operational stage, which focuses on concrete thinking and logical operations concerning tangible objects, may struggle with abstract academic concepts or nuanced social situations, such as understanding the implications of peer pressure or managing academic expectations, potentially resulting in increased stress and lower academic performance (Brown & Smith, 2020).

In Kenyan universities, students come from diverse educational backgrounds, and it is crucial to recognize that they may be at different stages of cognitive development. This variation can influence how they respond to the various academic, social, and emotional challenges they encounter. As Piaget's theory suggests, students who are in the formal operational stage may have a better ability to think critically and make decisions that reduce stress, enhance their well-being, and improve academic outcomes. In contrast, those in earlier stages may require additional support to navigate these challenges. Therefore, universities can benefit from understanding these developmental stages to tailor support services that cater to the cognitive needs of students at various stages of development (Dixon & Wood, 2018).

In conclusion, Piaget's theory of cognitive development provides an important lens through which to understand how students' cognitive stages influence their ability to handle academic

pressures and maintain well-being. Universities that consider students' cognitive developmental stages can better support their academic success and mental health, contributing to a more positive educational experience (Piaget, 1973).

### 2.1.3 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding motivation and well-being. SDT focuses on three core psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to this theory, when these needs are fulfilled, individuals are more likely to experience positive well-being and intrinsic motivation, which can lead to better performance in various areas, including academic achievement.

Autonomy refers to the sense of control over one's actions and decisions. In an academic setting, this could manifest as students having the freedom to choose how they approach their studies or being able to decide the methods they use for learning. Competence is the sense of being effective and capable in one's abilities. Students who feel competent in their academic work tend to be more motivated and perform better. Lastly, relatedness is the feeling of connection and belonging, which can come from positive relationships with peers, faculty, and other individuals within the academic community.

In the context of student well-being and academic performance, SDT suggests that students who experience high levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are more likely to feel motivated, engaged, and supported. This positive emotional and psychological state leads to enhanced academic outcomes, as students are more likely to approach their academic responsibilities with enthusiasm and commitment.

### 2.1.4 The Stress and Coping Theory

The Stress and Coping Theory, developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), offers a valuable psychological framework for understanding how individuals manage stress and how these coping strategies impact their emotional well-being and performance. According to the theory, stress arises when an individual perceives a situation as threatening or overwhelming. The way a person copes with stress can significantly affect both their mental health and their ability to perform well academically.

Stress occurs when the demands placed on a person exceed their ability to cope with them. In a university environment, common stressors include academic pressure, social challenges, financial issues, and health concerns. Coping mechanisms are the strategies students employ to manage these stressors. These mechanisms can be divided into problem-focused coping (such as seeking academic assistance or managing time effectively) and emotion-focused coping (such as using relaxation techniques or seeking emotional support from others). The effectiveness of these coping strategies influences students' mental health and academic performance.

The Stress and Coping Theory suggests that students who employ effective coping mechanisms, such as time management skills and emotional support networks, are better able to manage stress and maintain their well-being, which positively impacts their academic performance. Conversely, students who rely on maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance or substance use, are more likely to experience poor mental health, which can hinder their academic success.

## 2.2. Empirical literature review

### 2.2.1. Peer pressure

Peer pressure can significantly influence university students' behavior, impacting both their personal well-being and academic performance. In the context of Kenyan public universities, peer pressure has been shown to affect students in both positive and negative ways, with considerable implications for their overall success.

Negative peer pressure is a prevalent issue in many university settings, where students are often influenced by their peers to prioritize social activities over academic responsibilities. According to Kariuki (2021), students who succumb to negative peer pressure, such as skipping classes to attend parties or engaging in excessive socializing, often experience a decline in their academic performance. This behavior, which compromises their academic engagement, leads to poor grades, absenteeism, and a lack of commitment to their studies. Otieno and Othieno (2017) also emphasized the harmful effects of peer pressure, noting that students who are encouraged to indulge in risky behaviors such as substance abuse or neglect of academic duties may experience a decline in their mental health. These maladaptive coping mechanisms further hinder academic performance by decreasing focus, motivation, and overall cognitive functioning.

The impact of negative peer pressure is not just about direct academic disengagement; it also influences students' emotional well-being. Mwangi and Mwangi (2020) found that students who gave in to peer pressure and participated in unhealthy social behaviors reported increased levels of anxiety and stress. The added emotional burden, coupled with the distraction from academic activities, contributes to an overall deterioration in academic outcomes.

On the other hand, positive peer pressure can encourage students to perform better academically. Students surrounded by peers who value education and engage in constructive academic behaviors tend to adopt similar attitudes, thereby fostering a culture of academic excellence. According to Kariuki (2021), students who have friends who prioritize their studies, attend lectures regularly, and form study groups are more likely to engage actively in academic activities. This type of peer support creates a sense of accountability and motivation, which can enhance students' academic performance. Moreover, positive peer influence has been linked to increased participation in academic discussions, collaborative projects, and a stronger sense of academic community.

Research by Dixon and Wood (2018) supports this idea by demonstrating that when students feel part of a supportive peer network, they experience greater confidence and academic resilience. The peer network serves as a source of encouragement, reinforcing the importance of academic achievement and fostering a collaborative approach to learning. As a result, students in such environments tend to develop better study habits, maintain higher levels of academic engagement, and achieve better academic results.

Peer pressure is a complex factor that influences students in Kenyan public universities. While negative peer pressure can undermine academic performance through distractions and unhealthy behaviors, positive peer influence can foster an environment of motivation, accountability, and academic success. Universities need to create awareness about the dual impact of peer pressure and provide students with the necessary tools and resources to manage peer relationships effectively. Promoting a culture of academic excellence through peer mentorship programs and creating spaces for positive peer interaction can help students navigate the challenges of university life and enhance both their well-being and academic performance.

### 2.2.2. Mental and physical health

Mental health is an essential component of student well-being, significantly influencing academic performance. In Kenyan public universities, mental health challenges such as stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout are widespread, and they are often exacerbated by the academic pressure and the social dynamics that students experience. According to (Mbindyo and Kihoro,2019), mental health problems among students are strongly correlated with academic difficulties. The study found that students who struggled with mental health issues were more likely to experience difficulties in concentrating, completing assignments, and engaging in class discussions, which negatively impacted their academic performance.

Stress is one of the most common mental health issues affecting students in Kenyan public universities. (Wambui,2018) explored the link between academic stress and performance, concluding that students who experienced high levels of stress due to academic pressures were more likely to exhibit poor academic outcomes. Stress, in particular, affects students' ability to retain information and perform well in exams. Mental health issues often manifest as physical symptoms such as fatigue, sleep disturbances, and reduced energy levels, all of which impair students' cognitive abilities and hinder their academic potential.

Physical health is also a significant factor affecting students' academic performance in Kenyan public universities. A lack of physical well-being—whether due to poor nutrition, insufficient sleep, or physical illness—can severely affect cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and concentration, all of which are crucial for academic success. According to (Musa and Shabani**,** 2017), students who engaged in regular physical activities and followed a balanced diet were able to focus better, retain information more effectively, and perform better in exams. These

students demonstrated higher energy levels and improved physical health, both of which contribute to better academic outcomes.

On the other hand, (Njoroge, 2018) found that students who were sleep-deprived or had poor nutritional habits struggled academically. Lack of sleep and poor eating habits can impair students' cognitive functioning, leading to decreased academic performance. Students who experience chronic sleep deprivation often exhibit symptoms such as poor memory retention, reduced concentration, and fatigue, all of which negatively affect their academic success. Similarly, inadequate nutrition can lead to physical weakness, which further reduces students' ability to focus during lectures or study sessions, hindering their academic progress.

It is important to recognize that mental and physical health are interconnected and both significantly impact students' well-being and academic performance. Otieno and Othieno (2017) highlighted that students with poor physical health are more likely to experience mental health challenges, such as stress and anxiety. For instance, chronic physical illnesses can lead to feelings of helplessness and frustration, which in turn contribute to poor mental health and, consequently, academic failure. Likewise, students suffering from mental health issues often neglect their physical health, such as skipping meals or not exercising, which further compounds the negative impact on their academic performance.

Therefore, promoting both mental and physical health is critical for improving academic outcomes in Kenyan universities. Universities need to take a holistic approach to student well-being, addressing both psychological and physical health to ensure that students have the necessary resources and support to succeed academically. Providing mental health counseling, promoting physical fitness, offering nutritional advice, and encouraging healthy sleep habits can

significantly improve students' overall well-being and their ability to perform well in their academic endeavors.

Research has demonstrated that when students have access to adequate mental health services and maintain a healthy lifestyle, they are better able to manage academic stress, perform well in their studies, and achieve higher academic outcomes. As such, universities should prioritize student well-being by offering comprehensive mental health services, promoting physical health initiatives, and creating an environment that supports both physical and mental wellness to foster improved academic performance.

### 2.2.3. Social support

Social support is a critical factor in shaping students' well-being and academic performance in Kenyan public universities. It includes the emotional, informational, and practical assistance that students receive from their family, peers, faculty, and the wider university community. Research indicates that students with strong social support systems are better equipped to manage stress, navigate challenges, and maintain a positive mental state, all of which enhance their academic success.

Peer support plays a significant role in improving academic performance. In Kenyan universities, students often rely on one another for both academic help and emotional support. Studies, such as those by (Mwangi and Mwangi, 2020), show that students who are part of supportive peer groups tend to remain motivated, attend classes regularly, and engage actively in academic activities. Peer networks provide opportunities for students to collaborate, share knowledge, and clarify academic doubts, creating a positive learning environment that fosters academic growth. Furthermore, (Karanja, 2019) found that students who participate in peer study sessions or seek

academic advice from classmates experience less anxiety and feel more capable of managing their studies. This emotional and academic support from peers contributes to better performance, as it helps students feel more connected and less isolated. However, the quality of peer relationships is essential, as toxic or negative peer influence can lead to distractions and negatively affect academic performance, as noted by (Wambui, 2018).

Family support is another essential component of social support that influences students' academic success. According to (Otieno and Othieno,2017), students who receive emotional and financial support from their families are more likely to succeed academically. Family support helps students feel confident and provides the resources necessary to succeed, such as textbooks and reliable internet access. Emotional encouragement from family members allows students to manage stress and maintain a positive outlook during challenging times. (Mwangi and Mwangi,2020) found that students who received consistent emotional backing from their families were more resilient in dealing with academic stress and were better at balancing academic demands with personal life, leading to improved performance. In contrast, students without strong family support often face financial struggles and emotional isolation, which can hinder their academic achievements.

Faculty support and institutional backing also significantly impact students' academic performance. (Otieno and Othieno, 2017) highlighted that faculty members who are approachable and provide academic guidance and mentorship help students navigate their academic journeys more effectively. Faculty support allows students to seek clarification, get feedback on assignments, and ask questions about complex concepts, which enhances their academic growth. Additionally, (Mbindyo and Kihoro,2019) emphasized that universities that foster faculty-student interactions and mentorship programs create a positive academic

environment, where students feel supported and encouraged to succeed. These institutional support systems play a crucial role in improving students' academic performance. Students who take advantage of university-provided resources, such as academic advising, counseling services, and mentorship programs, tend to perform better because they have the tools and guidance needed to cope with academic pressures.

Extracurricular activities, peer mentorship programs, and counseling services all provide essential support networks that contribute to academic success. Karanja (2019) found that students who participate in extracurricular activities often develop strong social connections, which help reduce stress and increase engagement in university life, thereby enhancing academic performance. Similarly, (Wambui, 2018) noted that on-campus counseling services are crucial for addressing mental health concerns and assisting students in managing emotional challenges, further supporting their academic achievements.

In conclusion, social support plays an integral role in determining students' academic performance and overall well-being in Kenyan public universities. Peer, family, and faculty support all provide students with the emotional, academic, and practical resources needed to succeed. Positive peer relationships, strong family backing, and supportive faculty interactions foster an environment where students can effectively manage stress, stay motivated, and perform well academically.

### 2.2.4 University policies

University policies play a crucial role in shaping students' academic performance and overall well-being in Kenyan public universities. These policies set the framework within which students interact with their academic, social, and personal environments. Well-structured academic regulations, such as clear guidelines for course selection, attendance, assessments, and graduation requirements, help students stay focused and on track with their studies. According to (Mbindyo and Kihoro, 2019), universities with well-defined academic policies allow students to understand their responsibilities and reduce confusion, enabling them to perform better academically. For instance, strict attendance policies encourage students to attend classes regularly, which is essential for academic success.

Mental health support policies are another critical component of university policies that influence students' academic performance. As the pressures of university life can affect students' mental health, institutions in Kenya are increasingly implementing policies that provide counseling services, stress management workshops, and access to psychological support. (Otieno and Othieno, 2017) emphasized that universities offering mental health services contribute to improved student well-being and academic performance, as these services help students cope with academic stress and reduce the likelihood of burnout. In Kenyan public universities, where many students face mental health challenges, these policies are particularly valuable in ensuring that students can manage emotional challenges and focus on their studies.

Social support networks, which are often encouraged through university policies, also significantly impact students' academic success. Many Kenyan universities have established mentoring programs, peer support groups, and student organizations to help students build connections with their peers and faculty members. (Mwangi and Mwangi, 2020) found that

universities with strong mentoring programs foster positive relationships between students and faculty, enhancing academic performance. These support systems allow students to share knowledge, seek advice, and navigate challenges, both academic and personal, thus improving their overall well-being and academic outcomes. Similarly, family support policies that provide financial assistance or ensure access to resources can ease the burden on students, allowing them to focus on their studies without the distraction of financial struggles.

Financial aid policies are particularly important in Kenyan public universities, where many students come from low-income backgrounds. Without financial support, students may struggle to afford tuition, books, or other academic necessities. (Mbindyo and Kihoro, 2019) noted that universities offering financial aid programs, scholarships, or bursaries help alleviate these financial burdens and allow students to concentrate on their studies.

Moreover, university policies that promote extracurricular activities also contribute to students' well-being and academic performance. Participation in sports, clubs, and cultural activities allows students to relax, build leadership skills, and form social connections. According to (Wambui, 2018), students involved in extracurricular activities often have better time management skills and greater resilience to academic pressures, which can enhance their academic performance. Lastly, university disciplinary policies that ensure fairness and transparency contribute to maintaining a positive academic environment, where students can focus on their education without distractions.

In conclusion, university policies significantly influence students' academic success and mental well-being in Kenyan public universities. Academic regulations, mental health support, social support networks, financial aid, and extracurricular activities all contribute to creating a supportive environment that fosters student growth and success.

## 2.3. Summary and Research Gaps

### 2.3.1 Summary

This study has explored the various factors influencing student well-being and academic performance in Kenyan public universities, with a focus on peer pressure, mental and physical health, university policies, and social support. Peer pressure plays a significant role in shaping student behavior and academic outcomes, with both positive and negative effects. Positive peer support can foster a productive academic environment, while negative peer pressure can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms that undermine academic success. Mental and physical health are closely tied to academic performance, as students who experience physical or mental health issues often struggle to perform at their best. University policies, such as those related to academic regulations, mental health support, and financial aid, are essential in providing students with the necessary resources and guidance to succeed academically. Lastly, social support from peers, family, and faculty is crucial for students' overall well-being and can enhance their resilience, motivation, and academic performance.

In conclusion, these factors are interrelated, and universities that prioritize student well-being through supportive policies and a positive social environment create conditions that help students thrive academically. A holistic approach that addresses academic, emotional, and social needs is essential in fostering an environment conducive to academic success in Kenyan public universities.

### 2.3.2 Research Gaps

Despite the wealth of literature on student well-being and academic performance, several research gaps remain that require further exploration. Firstly, while much of the existing research

on this topic is generalized across different contexts, there is a lack of focused studies specifically examining Kenyan public universities. The socio-economic and cultural factors unique to Kenya may influence how elements like peer pressure, mental health, and university policies impact student performance, thus warranting more localized studies (Mbindyo & Kihoro, 2019). Additionally, most studies on student well-being and academic performance are cross-sectional, providing only a snapshot of the situation. Longitudinal research that tracks these factors over time would offer deeper insights into how sustained well-being interventions and the effects of peer pressure or health issues evolve throughout a student's academic career (Otieno & Othieno, 2017).

Another gap lies in the examination of university-specific policies, with limited research focusing on how the unique policies of individual institutions, such as Kenyatta University, influence student outcomes. While there is general research on university policies, a more detailed analysis of how specific institutional practices like academic advising, counseling, or financial aid programs contribute to student success is needed (Mwangi & Mwangi, 2020). Furthermore, much of the current research centers on mental health, with little emphasis on the impact of physical health on academic performance. A more comprehensive understanding of how physical well-being—such as diet, exercise, and sleep—affects students' ability to perform academically is crucial (Wambui, 2018).

Moreover, there is a significant gap in studies that explore the intersectionality of student well-being. Factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural background can have varying impacts on students' experiences in university, yet limited research has delved into how these factors intersect and influence academic outcomes (Karanja, 2019). Lastly, while peer support is frequently studied, the role of support from non-peer sources, such as family, faculty, and other

university support networks, has not been explored as thoroughly. Research into how these different forms of social support contribute to student well-being and academic performance could offer a more holistic view of the support systems necessary for academic success (Otieno & Othieno, 2017). Addressing these research gaps will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting student success and well-being in Kenyan public universities and can inform targeted interventions to improve academic performance.

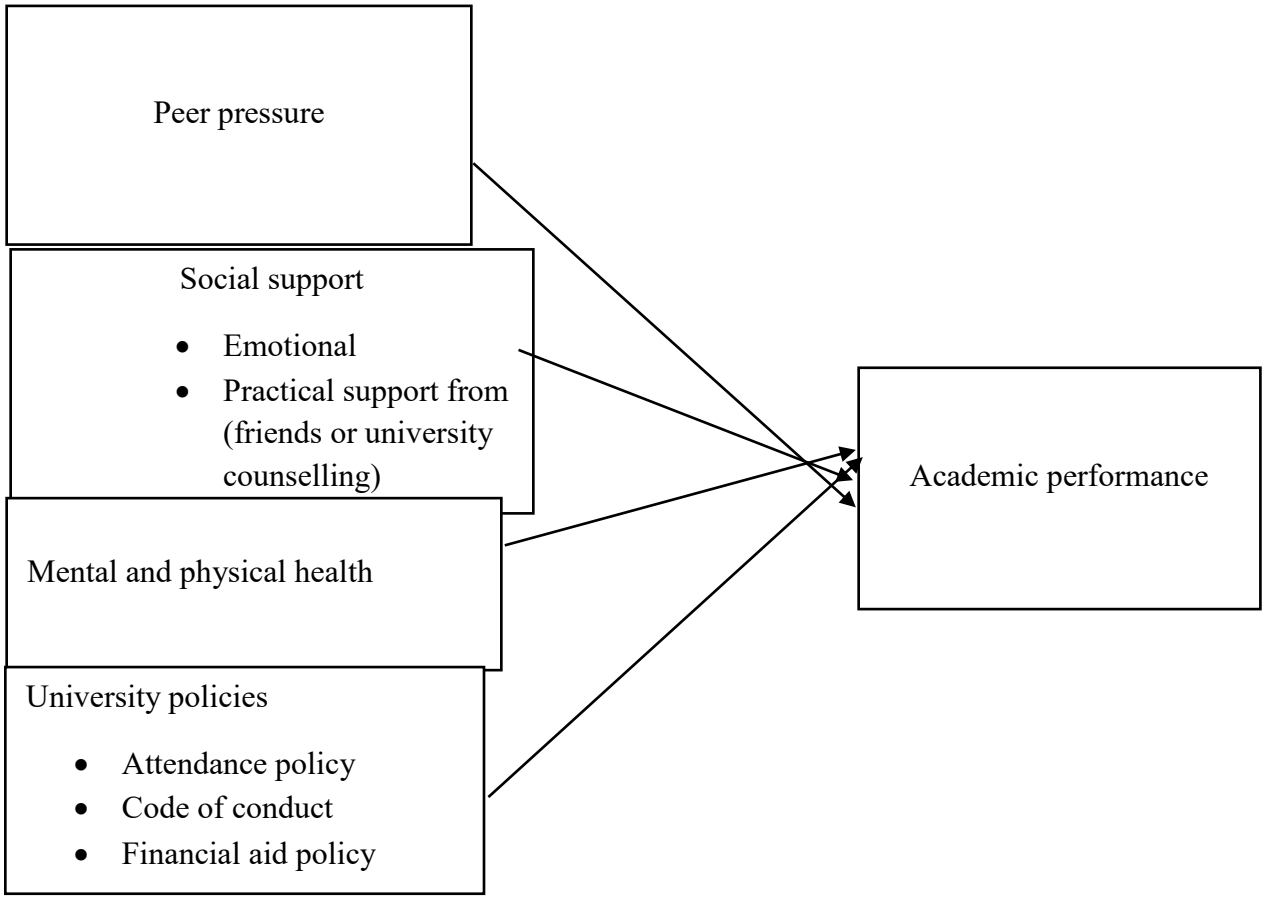
### 2.4 Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework shows the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The independent variables are peer pressure, mental and physical health, social support and university policies and the dependent variable is academic performance as illustrated in the conceptual framework presented in the figure 2.1

**Figure 2.1**

***Conceptual Framework***

**Independent Variable** **Dependent Variable**




## 2.5 Operationalization of variables

Operationalization of variables refers to the process of defining and specifying how abstract concepts (like peer pressure, social support, mental and physical health and university policies) will be measured in a research study. It translates broad theoretical concepts into measurable

indicators so that researchers can collect data and analyze the relationships between these variables.

Table 2.2

*Operational definition of variables*

| **Variable** | **Definition** | **Indicator** | **measurement** | **Scale/type** | **Type of statistics** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Peer pressure | The influence exerted by peers to conform to behaviors, attitudes or values. | -frequency of peer influence<br>-Type of peer pressure (negative or positive)<br>-peer conformity behavior | -Survey questionnaire<br>-Interviews<br>-Observation | Likert Scale (1-5) | -Descriptive statistics<br>-Inferential statistics |
| Mental and physical health | The overall well-being of students, encompassing emotional stability, psychological health, and physical fitness. | - Mental Health<br>- Physical Health | - Mental Health: Anxiety and depression levels measured using the *GAD-7* and *PHQ-9* scales.<br>- Physical Health: Frequency of physical exercise and self-reported physical health status. | Likert Scale (1-5) | Descriptive Statistics (mean, standard deviation), Regression Analysis |
| Social support | Emotional, informational, and practical assistance from peers, family, faculty, or | - Peer Support<br>- Family Support<br>- Faculty Support | - Peer Support: Frequency of support received from peers in academic or | Likert Scale (1-5) | Descriptive statistics |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | university staff that influences students' well-being and academic performance. | | emotional matters (Likert scale).<br>- Family Support: Perception of family involvement and support (self-report).<br>- Faculty Support: Perception of family involvement and support (self-report).<br>- Faculty Support: Perception of academic and emotional support from faculty (Likert scale). | | |
| University policies | Rules, regulations, and programs implemented by the university, including attendance, mental health support, academic advising, and financial assistance. | - Academic Policies<br>- Mental Health Policies<br>- Financial Aid Policies | - Perception of academic policies (Likert scale).<br>- Awareness and usage of mental health services (self-report).<br>- Access to financial aid programs (self-report). | Likert Scale (1-5) | Descriptive Statistics (mean, frequency), Correlation Analysis |
| Academic performance | The level of achievement demonstrated by students in their academic endeavors, | - GPA<br>- Course Completion<br>- Academic Engagement | - GPA: Current GPA or academic standing (university records).<br>- Course | Continuous (GPA), Percentage (Course Completion), Likert Scale (Engagement) | Descriptive Statistics (mean, frequency), Regression Analysis |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | including grades, course completion, and overall GPA. | | Completion: Percentage of successfully completed courses (academic records).<br>- Academic Engagement: Level of participation in academic activities (self-report). | | |

**2.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter involves theoretical orientation and framework, empirical literature review of the study, research gap and conceptual framework also it contains operationalization of variables. As the core of our literature review, the selection evaluates the impact of student wellbeing on their academic performance in Kenyan public universities.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology that will be used to achieve the objectives of the study. The chapter begins with describing the research design. It also describes the target population and the sampling techniques. The chapter also describes the location of the study. Further, it discusses piloting, data collection instruments, methods and analysis techniques.

## 3.1 Research design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that researchers use to integrate the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way. It specifies the procedures for collecting, measuring, and analyzing data. In the context of this study on the impact of student well-being on their academic performance in Kenyan public universities, a descriptive correlational research design will be used.

Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics or behaviors of a population being studied, without manipulating the environment or variables. This design will allow for the exploration of how student well-being variables (peer pressure, mental and physical health, university policies, and social support) relate to academic performance. The aim is to gather detailed information about the current state of student well-being and its influence on academic outcomes.

According to Creswell (2014), descriptive research helps in obtaining an accurate representation of a phenomenon in its natural setting. In this study, students' perceptions and experiences regarding their well-being and academic performance will be captured using structured

questionnaires and interviews. This approach will provide insights into the various factors that contribute to students' academic success or failure within Kenyan public universities.

Correlational research is suitable for this study as it allows the identification of patterns and relationships between well-being and academic performance (Field, 2013). This design does not imply causation but seeks to highlight associations that may inform future interventions to improve students' academic outcomes.

### 3.2 Target population

For this study on the impact of student well-being on their academic performance in Kenyan public universities, the target population will consist of undergraduate students currently enrolled in Kenyan public universities, with a focus on Kenyatta University as a case study. The study will target 100 students in faculty of education in Kenyatta university.

### 3.3 Sample and sampling techniques

The sample comprises undergraduate students currently enrolled at Kenyatta University (KU). To ensure a diverse and representative sample, participants are drawn from different schools, departments, and academic years. Additionally, 15 key informants, including student counselors and academic advisors, are included for qualitative insights.

Based on the total population of KU undergraduate students, a sample size of approximately 250 students is determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table for sample size estimation. This ensures the sample is large enough for reliable statistical analysis while being feasible in terms of data collection.

The study employs a stratified random sampling technique. This approach ensures that all sub-groups within the target population are adequately represented. The strata are based on: school

and department, year of study and demographic factors such as gender. From each stratum, students are selected randomly to ensure fairness and reduce sampling bias. For qualitative data, purposive sampling is used to select key informants such as counselors and academic advisors, as they are best positioned to provide in-depth insights into student wellbeing.

### 3.4. Instruments

The study will use both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as data collection instruments. A structured questionnaire will be distributed to students to collect quantitative data on their wellbeing (e.g., physical health, mental health, social support, and financial status) and academic performance (e.g., GPA, study habits, and time management). The questionnaire will consist of Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice questions, and demographic information.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a select group of students to gather qualitative data on their personal experiences and perceptions of how their wellbeing influences their academic performance. The interviews will provide richer, more nuanced insights that may not be captured in the questionnaires.

### 3.5. Pilot study

A pilot study will be conducted with a small group of students from Kenyatta University to test the reliability and validity of the research instruments. The pilot study will help identify any issues with the wording or structure of the questionnaire and interview guide, as well as provide an opportunity to assess the clarity of the questions and instructions. The feedback from the pilot study will be used to revise the instruments to ensure that they effectively measure the intended variables.

### 3.5.1 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure. In this study, ensuring the validity of the questionnaire and interview guide is essential for accurately assessing the relationship between student wellbeing and academic performance. Content validity will be established by having experts in fields such as psychology, education, and student welfare evaluate the instruments to ensure they adequately represent the key aspects of student wellbeing (mental, physical, emotional, and social wellbeing) and academic performance (GPA, study habits, and academic challenges). Feedback from these experts will help refine the instruments for clarity and relevance. Face validity, which assesses whether the instrument appears to measure what it is intended to measure, will also be considered by asking a sample of students to review the items for clarity and understanding. Construct validity, which ensures the instrument truly measures the theoretical constructs it is meant to assess, will be ensured by aligning the study's constructs of student wellbeing and academic performance with established scales and frameworks used in previous research.

### 3.5.2 Reliability test

Reliability refers to the consistency of a research instrument in producing stable and consistent results over time. To ensure the reliability of the instruments used in this study, the test-retest method will be employed. This involves administering the same questionnaire to a small group of students at two different points in time and comparing their responses. By measuring the stability of responses over time, the researcher can assess whether the instrument consistently produces the same results. A reliability coefficient will be calculated to quantify this consistency, with an acceptable value (e.g., 0.80 or higher) indicating reliable instruments. This process will

help ensure that the data collected is dependable and can be trusted to accurately reflect the impact of student wellbeing on academic performance.

### 3.6 Data collection procedure

The data collection procedure begins with thorough preparation, including developing and validating instruments such as questionnaires and interview guides. Ethical clearance is obtained from Kenyatta University's Ethical Review Board, and permissions are secured from university authorities. A pilot study is conducted with a small group of participants to refine the instruments. Stratified random sampling is used to select 250 undergraduate students proportionally across schools, while purposive sampling identifies approximately 15 key informants, such as counselors and advisors. Primary data is collected through questionnaires distributed to students and semi-structured interviews with key informants. Additionally, secondary data, such as institutional reports and academic records, is reviewed to complement primary sources.

To ensure accuracy and reliability, completed questionnaires are checked for errors, and interviews are recorded and transcribed. Ethical considerations are emphasized, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining anonymity, and safeguarding participants' data. Throughout the process, data is securely stored in password-protected systems for digital files and locked cabinets for physical records. Regular monitoring ensures data integrity, while the reflective journal captures valuable insights during the collection process. These measures create a systematic and ethical foundation for gathering comprehensive data aligned with the study's objectives.

### 3.7 Data analysis and presentation

The data analysis in this study will involve both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a well-rounded understanding of the impact of student wellbeing on academic performance.

#### 3.7.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire will be analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). First, descriptive statistics will be used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and to present a general overview of their responses regarding wellbeing and academic performance. This will include measures such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies, which will help outline the trends in the data.

To explore the relationship between student wellbeing and academic performance, inferential statistics will be applied. Correlation analysis will be conducted to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between various aspects of student wellbeing, such as mental, physical, emotional, and social wellbeing, and academic performance indicators, including GPA, study habits, and perceived academic challenges. Additionally, regression analysis will be used to examine whether certain dimensions of student wellbeing can predict academic performance, offering a more detailed understanding of the potential influences on academic outcomes.

#### 3.7.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews will be transcribed, and a thematic analysis will be performed. This method involves reading through the interview transcripts, identifying recurring themes, and coding the data to organize it into categories that align with the research questions. Thematic analysis will allow for the exploration of deeper

insights into students' personal experiences with their wellbeing and its effect on their academic performance.

### 3.7.3 Presentation of Findings

The results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be presented in a clear and systematic manner. Quantitative data will be displayed using tables, charts, and graphs to illustrate key findings, such as correlations and regression outcomes. These visual aids will facilitate easy interpretation of the data, making the relationships between wellbeing and academic performance more understandable.

The qualitative findings will be organized thematically, with key quotes from interview participants used to highlight the main themes that emerged. These quotes will help contextualize the quantitative findings, offering a more personal and detailed perspective on how student wellbeing affects academic performance.

## 3.8. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are essential in ensuring that the study is conducted in a responsible and respectful manner, safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of the participants. This section outlines the ethical principles that will guide this research, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity.

### 3.8.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is a fundamental ethical requirement, ensuring that participants fully understand the nature, purpose, and potential impacts of the study before agreeing to take part. Participants will be provided with a detailed information sheet that explains the objectives of the study, the data collection procedures, and their rights as participants. They will also be informed

of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Once participants have reviewed this information, they will be asked to provide written consent to participate in the study. This process guarantees that participants are fully aware of what their involvement entails and that their participation is based on a clear understanding of the study's purpose.

### 3.8.2 Voluntary Participation

Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary. No participant will be coerced or pressured to take part in the research, and they will have the right to withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences. This ensures that participants are free to decide whether or not to participate, based on their comfort and willingness. Emphasizing voluntary participation helps to maintain the integrity of the research process and protects participants from any undue influence or pressure.

### 3.8.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial in protecting participants' personal information and responses. All data collected during the study will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Personal identifiers such as names or contact details will not be included in the study's findings. Only the research team will have access to the data, and any identifiable information will be securely stored and kept separate from the research findings. This ensures that participants' privacy is respected throughout the study.

### 3.8.4 Privacy

The privacy of participants will be respected at all stages of the research. Information gathered from participants will be handled with the utmost care, and personal details will not be shared

with third parties without explicit consent. During interviews and surveys, participants will be assured that their responses will be treated with respect and that no personal details will be disclosed. The study will avoid any unnecessary intrusion into participants' personal lives and will focus solely on the research questions.

### 3.8.5 Anonymity

Anonymity will be guaranteed for all participants in this study. Participants will be assigned codes instead of using their real names, and any identifying information will be removed from the data. This ensures that participants' identities are not revealed in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Anonymity protects participants from potential risks associated with their involvement in the research, particularly if sensitive issues are discussed. By ensuring anonymity, the study aims to foster trust and encourage honest and open participation.

## 3.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the research design and methodology for studying the impact of student wellbeing on academic performance in Kenyan public universities were presented. The chapter covered the research approach, target population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection instruments, pilot study, validity and reliability tests, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The following chapter will present the analysis and findings based on the data collected.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

## 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected to assess the impact of student wellbeing on academic performance in Kenyan public universities, focusing on Kenyatta University. It begins with the demographic profile of respondents, followed by the presentation of key findings based on the four main variables. The findings are illustrated using tables and figures.

## 4.1 Presentation of Research Findings

### 4.1.1 Response Rate

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, and 225 were completed and returned, yielding a 90% response rate. All 15 targeted interviewees responded, giving a 100% response rate for qualitative data.

**Table 4.1**

***Response Rate***

| **Category** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| Responses | 225 | 90% |
| Non-responses | 25 | 10% |
| **Total** | **250** | **100%** |

## 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic data gathered included gender, year of study, and school/faculty.

**Table 4.2**

***Gender of Respondents***

| **Gender** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 110 | 48.9% |
| Female | 115 | 51.1% |
| **Total** | **225** | **100%** |

### 4.2.1 Peer Pressure and Academic Performance

Students were asked to rate the extent to which peer pressure (positive or negative) influences their academic performance.

**Table 4.3**

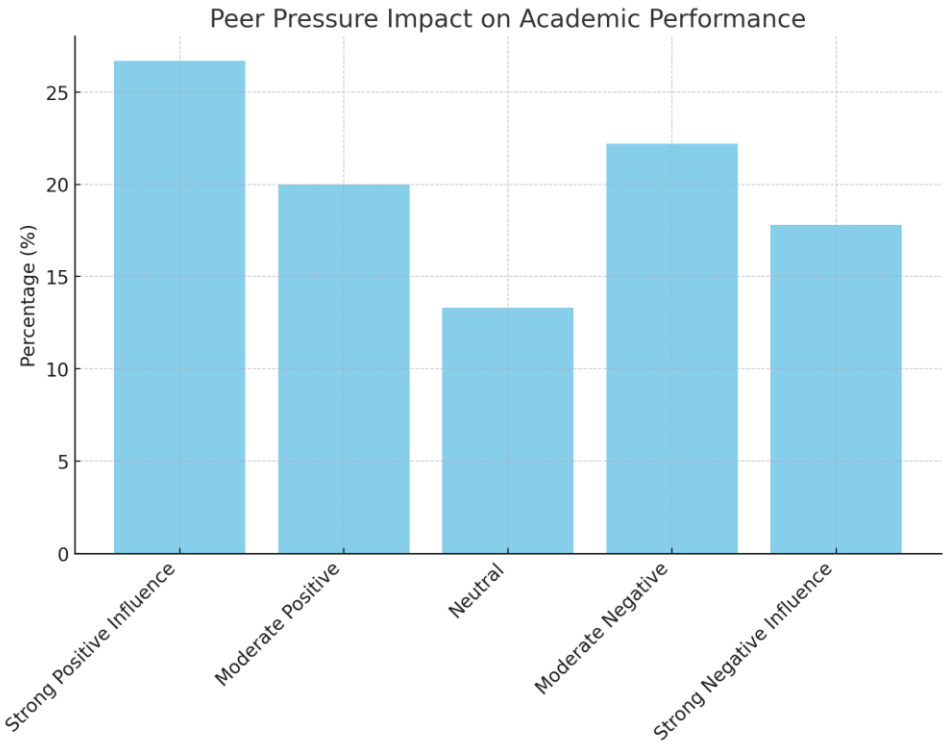
***Influence of Peer Pressure***

| **Level of Influence** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| Strong Positive Influence | 60 | 26.7% |
| Moderate Positive | 45 | 20.0% |
| Neutral | 30 | 13.3% |
| Moderate Negative | 50 | 22.2% |
| Strong Negative Influence | 40 | 17.8% |
| **Total** | **225** | **100%** |

46.7% of respondents acknowledged that peer pressure had a positive influence on their studies, while 40% reported negative effects. This supports Kariuki (2021), who observed that peer influence can both promote or impair academic performance depending on context.

**Figure 4.1**

**Bar Graph: Peer Pressure Impact on Academic Performance**



### 4.2.2 Mental and Physical Health and Academic Performance

Respondents were asked to self-assess their mental and physical health and indicate how these aspects impacted their studies.

**Table 4.4**

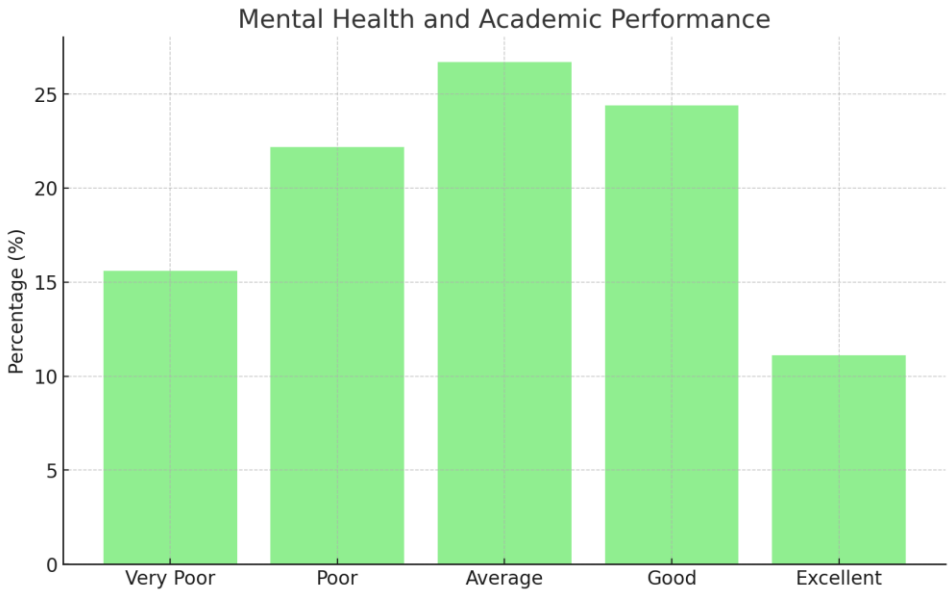
***Mental Health Status and Academic Impact***

| **Mental Health Status** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| Very Poor (e.g., severe anxiety/depression) | 35 | 15.6% |
| Poor | 50 | 22.2% |
| Average | 60 | 26.7% |
| Good | 55 | 24.4% |
| Excellent | 25 | 11.1% |
| **Total** | **225** | **100%** |

Nearly 38% of respondents rated their mental health as poor or very poor, citing anxiety and academic stress. This aligns with Wambui (2018), who found that poor mental health negatively correlates with academic achievement.

**Figure 4.2**

**Bar Graph: Mental Health and Academic Performance**




### 4.2.3 Social Support and Academic Performance

Social support was measured by levels of perceived support from family, peers, and faculty.

**Table 4.5**

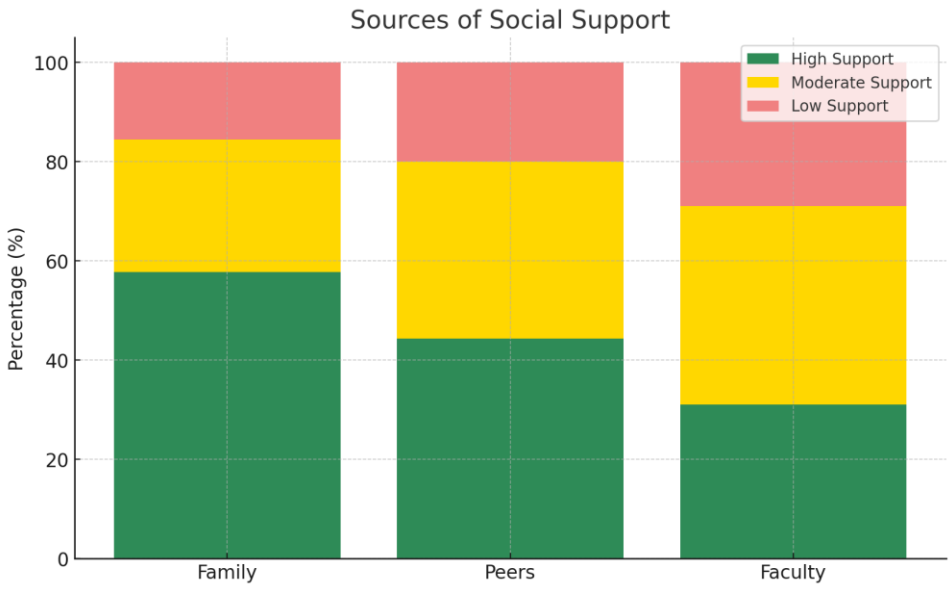
***Social Support Levels***

| Source of Support | High Support | Moderate Support | Low Support |
|---|---|---|---|
| Family | 130 (57.8%) | 60 (26.7%) | 35 (15.5%) |
| Peers | 100 (44.4%) | 80 (35.6%) | 45 (20.0%) |
| Faculty | 70 (31.1%) | 90 (40.0%) | 65 (28.9%) |

Most students reported strong family support, while faculty support lagged behind. Mwangi and Mwangi (2020) confirmed that students who receive consistent support perform better academically and report higher wellbeing.

**Figure 4.3**

**Stacked Bar Chart: Sources of Social Support**



### 4.2.4 University Policies and Academic Performance

Respondents evaluated the effect of university policies such as mental health services, attendance, and financial aid.

**Table 4.6**

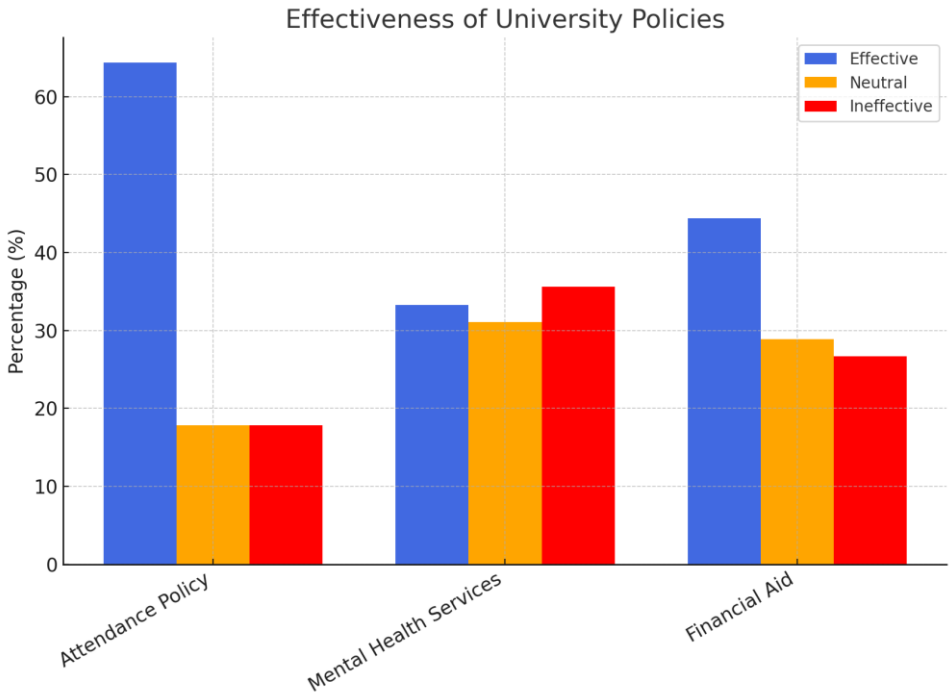
***Perceptions of University Policy Effectiveness***

| Policy Area | Effective | Neutral | Ineffective |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attendance Policy | 145 (64.4%) | 40 (17.8%) | 40 (17.8%) |
| Mental Health Services | 75 (33.3%) | 70 (31.1%) | 80 (35.6%) |
| Financial Aid | 100 (44.4%) | 65 (28.9%) | 60 (26.7%) |

Only 33.3% of respondents believed mental health services were effective. This calls attention to institutional gaps highlighted by Otieno and Othieno (2017), suggesting a need for improved student welfare policies.

**Figure 4.4**

**Effectiveness of university policy**




**Grouped Bar Chart:**

## 4.3 Limitations of the Study

While this study provided valuable insights into the relationship between student wellbeing and academic performance at Kenyatta University, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relied heavily on self-reported data, which is inherently subject to bias. Respondents may have underreported or overreported certain aspects of their wellbeing or academic performance due to social desirability bias, stigma—particularly around mental health issues—or fear of perceived judgment. This could have influenced the accuracy of the findings. Second, the timing of data collection coincided with examination and revision periods, which limited the researcher's ability to access some students and may have affected the willingness of participants

to provide comprehensive and thoughtful responses. Third, the scope of the study was limited to Kenyatta University, meaning the findings may not be fully generalizable to other public universities in Kenya that may operate under different institutional policies, have different student demographics, or face different contextual challenges. Furthermore, while the sample size was adequate for statistical analysis, it still represents only a fraction of the entire student population, and certain sub-groups such as students with disabilities or those from marginalized backgrounds may have been underrepresented. The study also faced the limitation of incomplete questionnaires, where some respondents failed to answer all items, resulting in the exclusion of those entries from analysis. Finally, the cross-sectional design of the research means that the findings represent a snapshot in time and cannot establish causality between wellbeing and academic performance; longitudinal studies would be needed to determine how these variables influence each other over time. Despite these limitations, the study's results offer a strong foundation for further exploration of student wellbeing in Kenyan higher education contexts.

### 4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and interpreted findings on the influence of student wellbeing on academic performance at Kenyatta University. These findings align with the theoretical framework and empirical studies discussed.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.0 Introduction

This chapter wraps up the study by highlighting the main findings, drawing conclusions from the results, and suggesting practical recommendations. The research explored how student wellbeing affects academic performance at Kenyatta University, focusing on areas such as peer pressure, mental and physical health, social support, and university policies.

## 5.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how students' wellbeing shapes their academic performance in Kenyan public universities. Specifically, it looked at whether peer pressure helps or hinders learning, how mental and physical health play a role, the importance of social support, and how university policies influence students' overall experience. The study was carried out using questionnaires and interviews with students and key informants. Out of 250 questionnaires, 225 were returned  a very good response rate. The results showed the following:

Peer pressure was found to play a dual role in students' academic performance. On the positive side, students surrounded by hardworking peers often felt encouraged to stay disciplined, attend lectures, and participate in group studies. This kind of influence created healthy competition, improved motivation, and fostered accountability. For instance, a student who might otherwise procrastinate could be inspired to study when friends form discussion groups or push one another towards academic goals.

On the other hand, negative peer pressure was a real challenge. Students admitted that they sometimes felt compelled to join friends in skipping classes, attending parties, or engaging in

social activities that distracted them from academic responsibilities. This often resulted in poor time management, reduced concentration, and lower grades. Some even reported being pressured into experimenting with alcohol or drugs, which further affected their health and academic consistency. In short, peer pressure acted as a double-edged sword it could either propel students towards excellence or derail their academic progress.

Mental and physical wellbeing emerged as one of the strongest predictors of academic performance. A significant proportion of students reported experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression due to heavy workloads, financial struggles, and personal issues. Poor mental health made it difficult for them to focus during lectures, complete assignments on time, or prepare effectively for exams.

Physical health had a direct impact. Students who suffered from fatigue, poor sleep, or inadequate nutrition reported feeling constantly drained, which weakened their academic engagement. On the other hand, those who engaged in regular exercise, maintained proper diets, and practiced good self-care habits were more energized and better able to retain information. The findings highlighted that without addressing both mental and physical health, academic success remained compromised.

Social support from family, peers, and faculty was found to be a protective factor for student wellbeing and academic outcomes. Family support was the strongest, with many students saying they felt encouraged by parents and siblings through financial assistance, moral support, and advice. This gave them confidence and reduced stress.

Peer support also played a key role. Students who had supportive friends felt less isolated, shared learning materials, and benefited from collaborative study sessions. However, the quality of peer

relationships mattered: while supportive friends boosted performance, toxic peer groups contributed to distraction.

Faculty support was reported as weaker. Many students felt that lecturers were often unapproachable or too busy to provide personal guidance. This lack of close faculty-student interaction meant that when academic or personal struggles arose, students often had to rely more heavily on peers and family instead of professional mentorship. Overall, students with stronger social networks were more resilient and better able to cope with academic stress.

University policies were found to be uneven in their effectiveness. Attendance policies were widely viewed as helpful. By requiring students to maintain regular attendance, these rules ensured consistent engagement with coursework and prevented students from falling behind. Financial aid policies were moderately effective. Students who accessed bursaries or scholarships reported reduced stress, but others said that the process was competitive and insufficient to meet their needs.

Mental health services, however, stood out as inadequate. Only a third of respondents felt they were effective. Many students were either unaware of counseling services or found them difficult to access due to stigma, long waiting times, or limited staff. This gap left students struggling silently with issues that affected both wellbeing and academics.

### 5.2. Recommendations

**For Universities**

Universities play the biggest role in shaping the environment where students live, learn, and grow. The findings from this study show that wellbeing and academics are inseparable. For that reason, universities should”

Improve mental health services. Many students reported stress, anxiety, and depression that affected their studies, yet very few found existing services useful. Universities need to invest in more professional counselors, create student-friendly wellness programs, and, most importantly, fight the stigma around seeking help. This could be done by normalizing conversations about mental health and making counseling more accessible, both physically and financially.

Encourage positive peer influence. Peer groups have huge power to shape students’ habits. Instead of letting negative peer pressure lead students astray, universities can harness peer networks through mentorship programs, peer-led study groups, and academic clubs. When students see their friends excelling and supporting each other, they are more likely to stay motivated and focused.

Strengthen faculty-student support. The study showed that many students feel faculty support is weak. Lecturers and advisors often seem distant, yet students need mentors who are approachable, understanding, and supportive. Training faculty in mentorship and communication skills would bridge this gap and make students feel more guided and valued beyond classroom teaching.

Review policies with wellbeing in mind. Most policies focus only on academics attenedance, exams, and discipline but ignore the wellbeing side of student life. Universities should design policies that integrate mental health programs, wellness weeks, sports, and financial support. A

holistic approach would help students feel cared for not just as learners but as whole human beings.

Provide financial relief. Financial stress was one of the strongest sources of anxiety among students. Universities should therefore expand bursaries and scholarships, and make fee payment plans more flexible. Reducing financial strain would allow students to concentrate better on their studies rather than constantly worrying about money.

**For Students**

While universities have a big role to play, students also carry responsibility for their own wellbeing and academic growth. Based on the findings, students can:

Learn to balance life. University life comes with freedom — but freedom without balance often leads to stress or failure. Students need to manage their time wisely, ensuring they allocate hours for study, social life, and rest. Simple practices like keeping a schedule or avoiding last-minute cramming can reduce unnecessary pressure.

Choose peers wisely. Not all friendships will build you up; some may distract or derail your progress. Students should deliberately surround themselves with peers who encourage healthy habits, teamwork, and academic excellence. Study groups, peer mentorship, and positive friendships can make the journey less stressful and more rewarding.

Take care of body and mind. Good health is not a luxury it is the foundation for success. Students should prioritize proper sleep, exercise regularly, eat balanced meals, and seek help when they feel overwhelmed. Ignoring stress only makes it worse; addressing it early can prevent burnout and improve both wellbeing and academic outcomes.

### 5.3 Conclusions

This study makes it clear that student wellbeing and academic performance are deeply connected, with several important conclusions emerging from the findings.

Peer pressure can act as both a blessing and a curse. On the positive side, students surrounded by disciplined peers are more likely to attend lectures, form study groups, and remain focused, which motivates academic excellence. Kariuki (2021) and Dixon & Wood (2018) similarly observed that positive peer influence fosters accountability and resilience in learning. However, negative peer pressure often leads to skipped classes, social distractions, or even risky behaviors such as substance use, which undermine both mental health and academic focus (Otieno & Othieno, 2017). This suggests that peer influence is not inherently harmful or beneficial — its impact depends on the context and type of pressure students encounter.

Good health is the backbone of academic success. Students with sound mental and physical wellbeing are able to concentrate better, manage stress effectively, and perform well in exams. Conversely, those struggling with anxiety, depression, poor sleep, or unhealthy diets find it harder to stay engaged academically. Wambui (2018) emphasized that stress and poor mental health significantly hinder academic achievement, while Musa & Shabani (2017) noted that regular physical activity and good nutrition boost focus and retention of information. Thus, health is not peripheral to learning — it is central.

Support systems make a real difference in student achievement. Families often provide both emotional encouragement and financial assistance, reducing stress and enabling students to stay committed to their studies (Otieno & Othieno, 2017). Similarly, supportive peer groups contribute to academic motivation, collaboration, and reduced isolation (Mwangi & Mwangi,

2020). However, faculty support was found to be weaker, with students perceiving lecturers as less approachable. Strengthening faculty-student interaction could therefore complement family and peer support by providing structured mentorship and guidance (Mbindyo & Kihoro, 2019).

University policies shape the overall student experience. Policies such as financial aid programs and attendance rules were seen as effective in supporting academic discipline and easing financial pressure. However, mental health policies and services were reported as inadequate, echoing Otieno & Othieno's (2017) argument that many universities in Kenya still lack robust welfare systems. As Mwangi & Mwangi (2020) also pointed out, policies that include mentorship, wellness initiatives, and accessible support services are essential to ensure both wellbeing and academic performance.

The overarching conclusion is that wellbeing and performance are inseparable. Academic success is not just about books and examinations; it is heavily shaped by how students feel mentally, physically, socially, and financially. A student who is anxious, isolated, or financially burdened is less likely to perform well, even with strong academic abilities. Conversely, students who feel supported, healthy, and secure have higher chances of thriving academically. This finding aligns with the view of Mutie (2023), who emphasized that the mental, emotional, and physical states of students are fundamental determinants of their academic outcomes.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

**Dear Respondent**

**RE: QUESTIONNARE FOR RESEARCH**

I am a student at The Management University of Africa, pursuing a Bachelor of Education Arts (English and Literature). I am currently conducting a research study entitled: "Impact of Student Wellbeing on Their Academic Performance in Kenyan Public Universities: A Case Study of Kenyatta University."

This study seeks to examine how factors such as peer pressure, mental and physical health, social support, and university policies affect students' academic performance. The information obtained will be used purely for academic purposes and will remain strictly confidential. I kindly request your cooperation in allowing me to administer questionnaires and, where necessary, conduct interviews with selected respondents. Your support will be invaluable in helping me complete this academic requirement.

Thank you for your time, support, and consideration.

**Yours faithfully,**

**Naomi Jeruto Kirich**

**APPENDIX II: RESEARCH STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE**

**STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Dear respondent,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to enable the research to obtain information about Impact of Student Wellbeing on Academic Performance in Kenyan Public Universities: A Case Study of Kenyatta University.

Please answer the following questions honestly. All information will be treated with strict confidentiality and used for academic purposes only. Tick (✓) the appropriate box or fill in the blank spaces where applicable.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age:

☐ 18–21 ☐ 22–25 ☐ 26–29 ☐ 30+

2. Gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

3. Level of Study:

☐ Undergraduate ☐ Postgraduate

4. Year of Study:

☐ 1st ☐ 2nd ☐ 3rd ☐ 4th+ ☐ Master's/PhD

5. School/Faculty: _____

Section B: Mental and Physical Health

6.In the past semester, have you experienced any of the following? (Tick all that apply):

☐ Stress ☐ Anxiety ☐ Depression ☐ None

7. How frequently do this mental health issues affect your concentration or academic work?

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

8. Have you ever sought professional mental health support (e.g., counseling)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

9. How do you rate your overall health?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

Section C: Peer Pressure and Student Wellbeing

10. How often do you feel pressured by peers to engage in non-academic activities (e.g., partying, skipping classes)?

☐ Never ☐ Rarely ☐ Often ☐ Always

11. Do you feel peer pressure negatively affects your academic focus or motivation?

☐ Not at all ☐ To a small extent ☐ To a moderate extent ☐ To a large extent

Section D: University Policies and Wellbeing

12. Are you aware of any university policies or programs aimed at promoting student wellbeing?

☐ Yes ☐ No

13. Have you ever participated in any university-organized wellness or mental health programs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

14. How easy is it to access counseling or mental health services at the university?

☐ Very Easy ☐ Easy ☐ Difficult ☐ Very Difficult

Section E: Social Support

15. Do you have a supportive relationship with family members regarding your studies?

☐ Yes ☐ No

16. Do you feel supported by your peers in academic or personal matters?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. How often do you use student support services (e.g., peer counseling, academic advisors)?

☐ Frequently ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

## APPENDIX III: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The Management University of Africa | MUA
Sponsored by The Kenya Institute of Management

**Date:** 12th August 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

NAOMI JERUTO KIRICH- BEDK/ 2/00082/3/21

This letter serves to introduce the above named who is a **Bachelors of Education Arts (B.Ed Arts)** student and is interested in carrying out research on **Impact of Student Wellbeing on Their Academic Performance in Kenyan Public Universities. A Case Study of Kenyatta University (KU).**

Any assistance accorded to her in pursuit of this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Juster Nyaga
Dean, School of Management and Leadership

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