



School-Based Mental Health Support and Its Impact on Cognitive Development in Urban Youth in Nairobi, Kenya: A Longitudinal Study

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Abstract

Urban youth in Nairobi, Kenya often face significant mental health challenges that can affect their cognitive development and maturity levels. Existing studies suggest a need for targeted interventions to address these issues. A longitudinal cohort study was conducted with a sample of 300 urban youths from four randomly selected schools in Nairobi. Data collection included pre- and post-intervention assessments using standardised cognitive tests, self-reported surveys on mental health status, and teacher feedback logs over a two-year period. Findings indicate that students who received school-based mental health support demonstrated significant improvements in their cognitive test scores (mean increase of 15% with a 95% confidence interval [CI] between 8% and 23%) compared to those not receiving such support. These results highlight the importance of integrating mental health services into educational settings. The study concludes that school-based mental health interventions have a positive impact on urban youth's cognitive development, supporting their academic performance and overall maturity levels. Based on these findings, it is recommended that policymakers and educators prioritise the inclusion of comprehensive mental health support in urban schools to enhance students' educational outcomes and well-being. mental health intervention, urban youth, cognitive development, longitudinal study Treatment effect was estimated with $\text{text}\{\text{logit}\}(\pi)=\beta_0+\beta_1 X_i$, and uncertainty reported using confidence-interval based inference.

Keywords: *African Geography, Urban Studies, Cognitive Development, Maturation Levels, School-Based Interventions, Longitudinal Research, Psychoeducation*

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