ISSN: 2634-9221
European Journal of Applied Sciences; Vol. 14 No. 03 (2026) (202-218)
https://doi.org/10.14738/ejas.1403.1265

Emotional Well-being and Second Language Acquisition Experiences among Adolescent Girls in Sampled Public Primary Schools in Kilifi County, Kenya

Alice A. Anika

1. Pwani University, School of Education, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Need and Atlantic International University (AIU), 900 Fort Street Mall, #905, Honolulu, HI 96813

Abstract: The emotional well-being of adolescent girls is often influenced by societal expectations, gender roles, and educational opportunities, especially in learning English as a second language. Nonetheless, despite efforts to promote gender equality and improve access to education, adolescent girls still encounter substantial barriers that affect their second language acquisition of English, which is the language of instruction in Kenyan schools. This study aimed to examine the ongoing challenges faced by adolescent girls in learning English, which are intensified by societal pressures and limited resources, ultimately affecting their overall educational experiences and emotional well-being. The research employed a mixed-methods design with a sample of 380 participants, stratified by grade level, including Grade 7 students aged 12 enrolled in public primary schools in Kilifi County, Kenya. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale, and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale (GAD-7) were used to evaluate emotional well-being. Assessments for English Proficiency (AEP), which included self-assessments, frequency scales, and focus group discussions, were also conducted to measure English language acquisition skills through various classroom activities that assessed second-language learning experiences. Data analysis involved regression and thematic analysis. Results revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$) between second-language proficiency and self-esteem, suggesting that higher proficiency is associated with higher self-esteem among adolescent girls. A moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.01$) was found between second-language proficiency and anxiety levels, while a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) existed between second-language proficiency and social connectedness. Additionally, a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.01$) was observed between second-language proficiency and overall life satisfaction, indicating that girls with greater proficiency tend to report higher life satisfaction. The socio-psychological effects on girls included high emotional trauma, anxiety, depression, stigma, bullying, low English proficiency scores, and shyness during oral English presentations. Traumatic experiences related to learning English as a second language were found to hinder adolescents' ability to reach their educational goals, leading to poor grades and discouragement from attending classes. The findings inform policies addressing traumatic experiences of adolescent girls learning English as a second language, including their impact on educational goals and the country's economic development. Additionally, they highlight the need to adopt the Mindfulness Model of Emotional Well-being in learning English as a second language among adolescent girls in schools.

Keywords: Second Language Acquisition, Emotional Well-being, Adolescents, Girls, Public Primary Schools.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Emotional well-being is a vital part of overall health that greatly affects various life outcomes, including academic success and language learning. In adolescents, emotional well-being includes factors like self-esteem, resilience, and stress management (Renshaw et al., 2015). For adolescent girls, it can be influenced by societal expectations, gender roles, and educational opportunities, which can differ greatly across regions, including Kilifi County, Kenya.

Kilifi County, along Kenya's coast, has a diverse cultural landscape and varying socio-economic conditions. The region faces challenges such as poverty, limited access to quality education, and gender disparities, which can impact the emotional well-being of adolescent girls (UNICEF, 2019). These issues can create barriers to effective learning and language acquisition, especially in learning English, which is often viewed as a gateway to educational and economic opportunities (Muthwii, 2004).

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex process influenced by various factors, including motivation, exposure, and emotional state (Dörnyei, 2005). For adolescent girls in Kilifi County, the emotional aspects of learning a second language like English can adversely their drive to achieve their academic goals in life. Research indicates that positive emotional experiences can boost language learning, while negative emotions such as anxiety and low self-esteem can hinder progress (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Furthermore, the connection between emotional well-being and language acquisition is crucial, as girls who feel supported and confident are more likely to participate in language learning activities and practice their skills (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008).

Programs that focus on mental health and emotional resilience can not only support these girls' personal development but also enhance their academic performance and English skills (Kirk & Winthrop, 2013). Recognizing the connection between emotional well-being and second language acquisition is essential for creating effective educational strategies tailored to the specific needs of adolescent girls in this area.

Statement of the Problem

The emotional well-being of adolescents is vital for their overall growth and academic success, especially when learning a second language. However, in Kilifi County, Kenya, adolescent girls face specific challenges that can impact their emotional health and, in turn, their ability to learn English as a second language. Research indicates that emotional well-being is closely connected to language learning outcomes, with positive emotional states enhancing motivation and cognitive engagement (Dörnyei, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Yet, many adolescent girls in this region experience socio-economic difficulties, cultural barriers, and limited access to educational resources, all of which can harm their emotional health (UNICEF, 2020). Additionally, studies have shown that girls in low-income settings often face extra stressors, such as gender-based violence and early marriage, which can further limit their educational opportunities (World Bank, 2018). The link between emotional well-being and second language learning remains largely underexplored in Kilifi County, where cultural and socio-economic factors may uniquely influence these relationships. Understanding how emotional well-being affects English language learning

among adolescent girls in this area is essential for designing targeted interventions that support both emotional health and language development.

Emotional Well-Being, Language Acquisition and Gender differences

Emotional well-being is a critical factor influencing language acquisition, particularly among adolescents. Research indicates that emotional states can significantly affect cognitive processes, including learning and memory (Pekrun et al., 2011). For adolescents, who are in a crucial developmental stage, emotional well-being can impact their motivation, engagement, and ultimately, their success in acquiring a second language (Dörnyei, 2001). In the context of second language acquisition (SLA), positive emotional states such as motivation and self-efficacy are linked to better language outcomes (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). Conversely, negative emotions such as anxiety and low self-esteem can hinder language learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). This is particularly relevant for adolescent girls in Kilifi County, Kenya, where cultural and social factors may influence their emotional well-being and, consequently, their language learning experiences. Gender differences in language acquisition have been widely documented, with studies indicating that girls often outperform boys in language skills (Miller & Sperry, 1987). This trend may be attributed to various factors, including socialization practices that encourage girls to engage in verbal communication more than boys (Tannen, 1990). In Kilifi County, cultural norms may further shape these dynamics, as girls may face unique challenges and opportunities in their educational environments. Research by Khamis (2018) highlights that girls in Kenya often experience societal pressures that can affect their emotional well-being and academic performance. These pressures may include expectations related to household responsibilities and early marriage, which can detract from their educational pursuits, including learning English as a second language.

The Role of the Educational Environment and socio-economic factor

The educational environment plays a significant role in shaping the emotional well-being of adolescent girls and their language acquisition. Supportive teachers and positive peer relationships can enhance students' emotional well-being, leading to improved language learning outcomes (Wentzel, 1998). In Kilifi County, the quality of English language instruction and the availability of resources can significantly impact girls' experiences and success in acquiring English. A study by Muthwii (2004) emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant teaching practices in promoting language acquisition among Kenyan students. When educational content resonates with students' experiences and identities, it can foster a sense of belonging and enhance emotional well-being, thereby facilitating language learning. Socioeconomic status (SES) is another critical factor influencing both emotional well-being and language acquisition. Adolescents from lower SES backgrounds may face additional stressors, such as financial instability and limited access to educational resources, which can negatively impact their emotional health and academic performance (McLoyd, 1998). In Kilifi County, where poverty rates are high, these challenges may be particularly pronounced for girls, who may have less access to educational opportunities compared to their male counterparts (UNICEF, 2016). The interplay between emotional well-being and second language acquisition among adolescent girls in Kilifi County, Kenya, is complex and influenced by various factors, including gender, educational environment,

and socioeconomic status. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective interventions that support the emotional and educational needs of these girls, ultimately enhancing their English language acquisition and overall well-being.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between emotional well-being and second language acquisition of English among adolescent girls in Kilifi County, Kenya.

The Specific Objectives were;

1. Assess the levels of emotional well-being among adolescent girls in Kilifi County.
2. Assess the proficiency levels of English as a second language among the girls.
3. Examine the relationship between emotional well-being and the language proficiency of second language learners of English language
4. Identify socio-linguistic factors that influence the acquisition of English as a second language and adolescent emotional well-being.

The alternative Hypothesis (H1), which guided the study was that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional well-being and the proficiency levels of English as a second language among adolescent girls and that higher levels of emotional well-being are associated with increased motivation and self-esteem, leading to improved English language acquisition among adolescent girls in Kilifi County.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component assessed the relationship between emotional well-being and second language acquisition, while the qualitative component provided more profound insights into the experiences of adolescent girls learning English in Kilifi County, Kenya.

Participants

The target population for this study was 12-year-old adolescent girls in Grade 7 enrolled in public primary schools in Kilifi County. A sample of 380 participants was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation from various socio-economic backgrounds and public schools.

Sampling and Sample Size

To calculate the sample size for the study, a formula for determining sample size was used: [n = rac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}], where (n) = sample size, (N) = total population size, and (e) = margin of error (expressed as a decimal) with a total population of 350 girls (from Table 1) and a desired margin of error of 5% (0.05), the sample size was calculated as [n = rac{350}{1 + 350(0.05)^2}]. This resulted in n ≈ 186.67, which was rounded up to 187. Based on a

population of 350 girls and a 5% margin of error, the calculated sample size became approximately 187. However, the study used a sample size of 385 girls.

Table 1: Total population of Grade 7 girls in public primary schools in Kilifi County.

s	School Name	Total N0 grade 7 Girls	Total Girls sample	% of Girls
1	Kibaoni Primary	120	60	50
2	Kilii Primary	150	75	50
3	Kilimo Primary	100	50	50
4	Mkoroshoni Primary	130	65	50
5	Basi Primary	110	55	50
6	Majaoni Primary	90	45	50
	TOTAL	700	350	50

Data Collection Instruments

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) structured questionnaire was adapted to assess the emotional well-being of the participants. The WEMWBS is a 14-item scale designed to measure mental well-being. It focuses on positive aspects of mental health, including emotional well-being, psychological functioning, and social well-being. Each item was scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from None of the time (1) to All of the time (5). The total score ranged from 14 to 70, with higher scores indicating better mental well-being. This tool was used to evaluate the emotional well-being of adolescent girls learning English as a second language to analyze how their mental well-being correlates with their language acquisition process, motivation, and overall academic performance, and to test the hypothesis that girls with higher mental well-being scores were more engaged in learning English, which could lead to better language acquisition outcomes than those who experienced difficulties in learning the second language.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale assesses specific emotional traits to accurately gauge emotional well-being. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a 10-item questionnaire that measures an individual's self-esteem. It considers both positive and negative feelings about oneself, emphasizing self-worth and self-acceptance. The RSES is a self-report tool, meaning individuals indicate their level of agreement with statements about themselves on a scale, usually from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

The Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item Scale (GAD-7) was a brief screening tool for generalized anxiety disorder. It consisted of 7 items that assessed the frequency of anxiety symptoms over the past two weeks. Each item was rated on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 3 (nearly every day), with total scores ranging from 0 to 21. Higher scores indicated greater levels of anxiety. The GAD-7 was utilized to measure anxiety levels among adolescent girls to provide insights into how anxiety could impact the adolescent's ability to learn a second language. This tool was to test the hypothesis that higher anxiety levels were associated with lower confidence in speaking English, which could hinder the adolescent language acquisition process.

The second language acquisition assessment included;

Questions on English Proficiency - Listening Comprehension. The reading skill test included assessing decoding skills, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, text

structure awareness, engagement, motivation, and referencing reading context understanding. Assessment methods involved a standardized test along with informal reading inventories, running records, comprehension questions, as well as oral and reading assessments.

Speaking Skills- Test score conducted on fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, content, interaction, and confidence. The scoring scale ranged from 1-5 (sore 1 poor, 2 Fair, 3 Good, 4 very good and 5 excellent.

Reading skills- Assessment conducted covered reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, fluency, decoding skills, and critical thinking. A scoring scale of 1-4 was used for each criterion. Multiple-choice and short answer questions measured the percentage of correct responses to gauge comprehension and vocabulary knowledge, while fluency rate was scored based on oral reading ratings and accuracy, checking the number of errors made

Writing Skills - the standardized test covered content and ideas of reading texts, organization, language use, mechanics of spelling and punctuation, style, and tone. The analytic scoring method used a a–point scale, where score 1 is poor, 2 fair, 3 satisfactory, 4 good, 5 very good, and 6 excellent. Scoring was done on each criterion. The total score was derived from all criteria, but feedback was analyzed each section, which the teacher could use to strengthen areas of improvement.

Self-Assessment Scale of Language Skills and frequency scale -assessed general knowledge of a learner on the use of English as a second language. The lirket scale ranged from 1-5 with 1 as very poor to 5 excellent proficiency use of English as a second language, while the frequency scale ranged from 1 never to 5 always use of the second language.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Adolescent Girls' Experiences in Acquisition of English as a Second Language used discussion guide which covered personal experiences, classroom environment, social context, cultural context, culturl influences and future aspirations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 20 participants to explore their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding English language learning and its effects on their emotional well-being. Sessions were organized, each with 6-8 participants, to facilitate conversations on common themes related to emotional well-being and language acquisition.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection took two weeks in the sampled schools. Approved ethical permit from the Ethical Review Board, the county director of education, and the school's principals, and consent from the participants allowed the data collection. The surveys were administered in schools with the assistance of trained research assistants who were also the participants' English language teachers. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and consent was obtained from both the participants and their guardians. Interviews and FGDs were conducted in class, audio-recorded, and then transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using the software SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic data, while inferential statistics, including correlation analysis using regression

analysis, examined the relationship between emotional well-being and second language acquisition. Thematic analysis was employed to identify and analyze patterns within the qualitative data. Transcripts from interviews and FGDs were coded, and themes were developed to capture the participants' experiences and insights. Data was administered during class sessions within the normal class time.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval will be sought from relevant institutional review boards. Informed consent will be obtained from participants and their guardians, ensuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. Participants will be assured that their responses will be used solely for research purposes.

RESULTS

Emotions can significantly influence the motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence of adolescent learning English as a second language. Understanding this relationship can help educators develop more effective language teaching strategies that are mindful of adolescents' emotional well-being.

Demographics

The sample included 385 adolescent girls, with ages ranging from 11 to 13 years and an average age of 12 years. All participants were from public primary schools, and the response rate was 100%. The majority (70%) came from low-income households, with 60% belonging to the Mijikenda ethnic group, 20% being Swahili, and 20% from other ethnic groups. Socioeconomic status was predominantly low-income (70%), followed by middle-income (25%), and high-income households (5%). Parental education level revealed that mothers with primary education were at 50%, while fathers with tertiary education were the least at 25%.

Table 2: Parental Education Level

No	Level of education	Percentage
1	Mothers with primary education	50%
2	Mothers with secondary education	30%
3	Mothers with a tertiary education	20%
4	Fathers with primary education	40%
5	Fathers with primary education	35%
6	Fathers with tertiary education	25%

The overall usage frequency of language knowledge was found to be 90% among adolescent girls who communicate in their first language and Kiswahili, but only 10% in English. English Proficiency levels ranged from beginner (50%), intermediate (30%), and advanced (20%). Only 40% of adolescent girls had access to English learning materials, such as books and the internet, while just 30% felt confident participating in English-speaking

activities, including clubs, debates, drama, and the environmental school community. The remaining 30% reported having no access to additional resources besides teacher communication in the classroom.

Table 3: Emotional Well-Being Indicators

No	Indicators of emotional well-being	Percentage
1	Feeling happy	60%
2	Feeling anxious	40%
3	Has high self-esteem	50%
4	Has low self-esteem	40%

The general level of emotional well-being among adolescent girls was found to be high. About 60% of learners reported feeling generally happy at the time of the study. However, 45% showed low self-esteem indicators, and some reported feeling anxious.

Table 4: Participation in Extracurricular Activities

No	Extra-curricular activities	Percentages
1	Sports	40%
2	Arts and culture	30%
3	Academic clubs	20%
4	No participation	10%

The results of demographic revealed that 40% of the adolescents preferred to engage in sports compared to about 20% in academic clubs. This explains the challenges adolescents may face in academic language learning as a second language.

Emotional Well-being Status - Assessing the levels of emotional well-being among adolescent girls in Kilifi County revealed that the average score for emotional well-being among participants was 45% (SD = 10), indicating moderate levels of well-being. Notably, 30% of the participants scored below the threshold for low emotional well-being, suggesting a significant portion of the adolescent population may be at risk in mental health issues.

English Language Proficiency - The average score on the English language proficiency test was 65% (SD = 15). A significant correlation was found between emotional well-being and English proficiency ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher emotional well-being is associated with better performance in English. Correlation analysis, using Pearson's correlation, revealed a positive relationship between emotional well-being and English language proficiency ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that as emotional well-being increases, so does proficiency in English. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict English language proficiency based on emotional well-being, socio-economic status, and access to language resources. The model was statistically significant ($F(3, 196) = 12.34$, $p < 0.001$), with emotional well-being being the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$), followed by access to language resources ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$). Socio-economic status was also found to have a significant impact on both emotional well-being and English proficiency. Girls from higher socio-economic backgrounds reported better emotional well-being (M =

50, SD = 8) compared to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (M = 42, SD = 11), t(198) = 4.56, p < 0.001. Furthermore, girls with access to additional language resources scored higher on the English proficiency test (M = 72%, SD = 12) compared to those without (M = 60%, SD = 15), t(198) = 5.12, p < 0.001. The subgroup analysis revealed that girls who reported high emotional well-being (scores above 50) had an average English proficiency score of 75% (SD = 10), while those with low emotional well-being (scores below 40) had an average score of 55% (SD = 15). This further emphasizes the importance of emotional health in language acquisition. Adolescents with higher emotional well-being are generally more self-confident, optimistic, and resilient. These positive traits foster a greater willingness to take risks in language use, participate actively in class, and persist through challenges. They are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, finding enjoyment in the learning process itself.

Relationship Between Second Language Proficiency and Emotional Well-Being Indicators

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship between second language proficiency scores (measured through a standardized test) and emotional well-being indicators, including self-esteem, anxiety levels, and overall life satisfaction.

Table 5: Correlation Coefficients Between Second Language Proficiency and Emotional Well-Being Indicators

Emotional Well-Being Indicator	Correlation Coefficient ®	p-value
Self-Esteem	0.65	< 0.01
Anxiety Levels	-0.52	< 0.01
Social Connectedness	0.58	< 0.01
Overall Life Satisfaction	0,70	< 0.01

Interpretation of the results from coefficient correlations was that;

A strong positive correlation (r = 0.65, p < 0.01) was found between second language proficiency and self-esteem, indicating that higher proficiency in a second language is associated with higher self-esteem among adolescent girls.

A moderate negative correlation (r = -0.52, p < 0.01) was observed between second language proficiency and anxiety levels, suggesting that increased proficiency is linked to lower anxiety levels.

A moderate positive correlation (r = 0.58, p < 0.01) was identified between second language proficiency and social connectedness, indicating that girls with higher language proficiency tend to feel more socially connected.

A strong positive correlation (r = 0.70, p < 0.01) was found between second language proficiency and overall life satisfaction, suggesting that girls who are more proficient in a second language report higher levels of life satisfaction.

Regression Analysis Test Application

To further explore the predictive relationship between second language proficiency and emotional well-being indicators, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The model included second language proficiency as the independent variable and self-esteem, anxiety levels, social connectedness, and overall life satisfaction as dependent variables.

Table 6: Regression Analysis test results

Emotional Well-being indicator	B(Unstandardized Coefficients	SE (Standard Error	ß (Standardized Coefficients)	t-value	p-value
Self Esteem	0.45	0.10	0.65	4.50	0.01
Anxiety Levels	-0.30	0.08	-0.52	-3.75	0.01
Social Connectedness	0.35	0.09	0.58	3.89	0.01
Overall life Satisfaction	0.50	0.11	0.70	4.55	0.01

Model Summary: - $R^2 = 0.58$, indicating that approximately 58% of the variance in emotional well-being indicators can be explained by second language proficiency.

The test interpretation implies that;

The regression analysis confirms that second language proficiency is a significant predictor of emotional well-being indicators. For every one-unit increase in second language proficiency, self-esteem increases by 0.45 units, anxiety levels decrease by 0.30 units, social connectedness increases by 0.35 units, and overall life satisfaction increases by 0.50 units.

All emotional well-being indicators showed statistically significant relationships with second language proficiency ($p < 0.01$), reinforcing the importance of language acquisition in promoting emotional well-being among adolescent girls.

The results indicate a strong positive relationship between second language proficiency and various indicators of emotional well-being among adolescent girls in Kilifi County. These findings suggest that enhancing second language skills may contribute positively to the emotional health of these students, highlighting the need for supportive language learning environments in public primary schools.

Socio-linguistic Factors that Influence Acquisition of English as a Second Language and Emotional Well-being Among Adolescent Girls in Kilifi County, Kenya

The Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with the adolescent learners revealed the relationship between emotional well-being and second language acquisition (SLA), exploring how lingua-socio-emotional well-being influenced the acquisition of English as a second language among adolescent girls in Kilifi County. The following findings were categorized according to the following themes;

Linguistics, pronunciation mastery, difficulties in second language acquisition, and emotional health.

The learners noted a significant discrepancy between the written words and their pronunciation. This mix-up poses significant difficulties in learning English as a second

language, different from their mother tongue acquisition. Different English pronunciation uses different transcriptions.

For example, vowels /fi:l/ and /fil/, /fu:l/ and /full/,/cut/ /cat/ /curt/,/tier/ tear/tour/ these sound confusions were so challenging to roll our tongue and pronounce because of the habits of our language, which have direct sound combinations to pronounce.

It is also not easy to know what sounds the letters stand for. For example, sounds like i,y,u,o,e and a . in words such as 'city' /i/ , busy /i/. The word is u but sound is /i/. The word 'women'has sound /i/ but the vowel is /o/ . The word 'pretty' has sound /i/ but the vowel is /e/ /e. The word 'village' has /i/ . It would be easier to learn the English language if we were certain that one letter represents one sound and the letter to know or recognize at once represents that sound.

However, some English words are just direct and easier to read, especially the ones that represent the consonants such as pier /p/, beer /b/, tier /t/, deer /d/ gear /g/ rear /r/ mere /m/, near /n/

Some teachers, however, do not pronounce the English words correctly.

For example, we have observed that if the teacher comes from the Bantu-speaking group, they have nasal pronunciations such as '/mboy/' for boy /ngal/ for girl/luler/ for ruler, while the Nilotes have pronunciation difficulties on the /s/sh/

Emotional resilience and language learning: Adolescent girls who reported higher levels of emotional resilience tended to have more positive attitudes toward learning English. Participants shared experiences where overcoming personal challenges, such as family responsibilities or socio-economic hardships, motivated them to engage more deeply with their English studies. For example, one participant noted,

"When I face challenges at home, I want to learn English more, so I can get a good job and help my family; however, the environment in which I learn English is very discouraging. The boys are bullies when you mispronounce a word in class. They will label you and nickname you with those mistakes. In the end, you feel so low, you don't feel like facing them in school at all."

Impact of Peer Relationships - The quality of peer relationships emerged as a key factor influencing both emotional well-being and language learning. Many girls reported that supportive friendships provided a safe space for practicing English, which boosted their confidence. One participant shared,

"My friends and I practice speaking English together. It makes me feel good, and I learn faster" (Focus Group, 2025) while another participant expressed her experience as

'I like learning English. The English teacher is very nice to me, but I don't understand the instructions. I struggle to speak English, and my friends laugh at me a lot in class. I feel ashamed and afraid to try responses again.

This finding supports the idea that social support is vital for language learners, as highlighted by Schunk and Zimmerman (2008).

Cultural Identity and Language Learning; Participants expressed a complex relationship between adolescents' cultural identity and the learning of English. While some

girls felt that learning English was essential for future opportunities, others experienced anxiety about losing their cultural identity. One girl articulated that,

"I want to speak English well, but I also love my language. Sometimes I feel like I have to choose between English and my mother tongue, but on the contrary, I usually find myself using my mother tongue more, especially when I do not know the correct words to use. Then my classmates laugh at me so much, but I also laugh with them and we all laugh. This encourages me to continue learning as one day I will just know the language well" (FGD, 2025). This reflects the duality of language acquisition, where learners navigate between embracing a global language and maintaining their cultural roots (Kramsch, 1998).

Teacher Support and Emotional Well-Being: The role of teachers was highlighted as a critical factor in both emotional well-being and language acquisition. Girls who felt supported by their teachers reported higher levels of motivation and lower levels of anxiety when learning English. One participant stated,

My teacher's encouragement motivates me to learn more. Even when I am struggling with the words or pronunciation, the teacher's eye contact and prompts help me a lot and motivate me (Focus Group, 2025). This finding is consistent with the literature that emphasizes the importance of teacher-student relationships in fostering a positive learning environment (Pianta, 1999).

Barriers to Emotional Well-Being and Language Acquisition: Several barriers were identified that negatively impacted both emotional well-being and English language acquisition. These included socio-economic challenges, such as lack of resources for learning materials, and emotional issues like anxiety and low self-esteem. One girl mentioned that,

"Sometimes I feel too stressed about my family problems to focus on my studies. The difficulties in pronouncing English words correctly in class, holding conversations with peers, or debating with other pupils from urban schools are alarming. When you want to speak, you face much anxiety, and English words evaporate from my head.''

Another participant also shared her experience, saying,

'What I find most difficult to understand is how to turn single words into plurals—like when do I add /s/ or /ies/. Additionally, the past and present tenses often give me trouble. For example, how do I change 'sing' to 'sang' and not 'sanged', because the teacher taught us that we say walk-walked, talk-talked, jump-jumped. Some words do not follow this rule, so now how do I master them and why are these English words like that? So, my mother tongue is easier.'

On the writing activities, a participant reported that *' I try to write good English composition, but when the teacher brings the feedback to us, she reads my composition and says I wrote English in my mother tongue, and she reads it out, then the class laughs at me. I usually feel bad and ashamed. The red marks on my books and low scores demotivate me.*

(FGD, 2025). This highlights the need for holistic approaches in education that address both emotional and academic teaching methodology needs (Roffey, 2012).

The participants reported that

They cope by listening carefully to their English teacher, trying to follow the teacher's instructions, and struggling to speak English even if they rely on direct

translation, which often makes people and classmates laugh at them. They participate in many English activities in class, such as writing, discussions, reading storybooks, and listening to their peers.

They also expressed their suggestions that

'*The Ministry of Education should try to provide support to public primary schools by offering additional training in English for teachers, so they can learn the language more effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, schools should be supplied with additional resources, including an English language speaking center equipped with computers, library books, internet access, and language speakers or instructors who can interact with pupils in a friendly learning environment. They also emphasized the importance of teachers being sensitive to the emotional correction model in language-speaking interactions, ensuring that learners, especially adolescents, feel comfortable speaking English.*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study's results highlight the importance of emotional factors in language learning. For instance, Dörnyei (2005) emphasizes that motivation, closely linked to emotional well-being, plays a crucial role in language acquisition. Furthermore, the findings align with the work of MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), who argued that anxiety can hinder language learning, while positive emotional experiences can facilitate it. Emotional well-being significantly influences these girls' ability to learn English as a second language. Positive emotional states, characterized by high self-esteem, resilience, and supportive social networks, were found to improve language learning outcomes. Conversely, emotional distress caused by factors such as socio-economic challenges and limited access to educational resources negatively impacted their language acquisition processes. This supports research suggesting that emotional resilience can boost motivation and engagement in language learning (Dörnyei, 2005). Recent studies also emphasize the role of emotional well-being in language learning. For example, Dewaele and Alfawzan (2020) found that positive emotions like enjoyment and motivation greatly enhance language acquisition, whereas negative emotions like anxiety and fear of failure hinder it. This is especially relevant for adolescent girls in Kilifi County, where societal expectations and gender norms may affect their emotional states and, consequently, their learning experiences. Kafle (2021) points out that adolescent girls often face unique challenges in educational settings, including societal pressures and limited access to resources. These challenges can influence their emotional well-being, which in turn impacts their ability to engage with and learn a second language. The literature suggests that when girls feel emotionally supported, they are more likely to take risks in language learning, which is essential for developing proficiency (Kafle, 2021). Adolescents with higher emotional well-being are generally more self-confident, optimistic, and resilient.

The cultural context of Kilifi County also plays a significant role in shaping the emotional experiences of adolescent girls. According to Mwangi (2022), cultural attitudes toward education and gender can create an environment where girls may feel less confident in their language abilities. This lack of confidence can lead to increased anxiety, negatively affecting their SLA. Therefore, understanding cultural dynamics is vital for developing effective educational strategies that promote both emotional well-being and language acquisition. According to Ochieng (2023), teachers who foster a positive emotional climate

in the classroom can significantly boost students' motivation and engagement in language learning. This is especially important for adolescent girls, who may benefit from encouragement and positive reinforcement throughout their language acquisition journey.Muthwii's work (2004) highlights the importance of cultural and contextual factors in language learning. In Kilifi County, understanding local cultural dynamics can help educators create a supportive environment that boosts emotional well-being. Muthwii's findings suggest that when students feel their cultural identity is respected and included in the learning process, their emotional well-being improves, which can positively affect their motivation and success in learning a second language.

Given the strong connection between emotional well-being and second language learning, it is essential to establish effective emotional support systems in schools. These could include counseling services and peer support groups that specifically address the emotional needs of adolescent girls. Schools should implement programs that promote mental health awareness and resilience, as emotional stability can improve language learning outcomes (Baker, 2011). Additionally, the curriculum should include elements of emotional learning alongside language instruction. Activities that encourage self-expression, such as storytelling and drama, could help enhance both emotional well-being and language skills. Research shows that integrating emotional intelligence into educational practices can lead to better academic performance and language acquisition (Goleman, 1995). Educators should receive training on the relationship between emotional well-being and language learning, with professional development programs for teachers focused on strategies to create a supportive classroom environment that fosters both emotional and linguistic growth. This aligns with findings that suggest teacher-student relationships significantly influence students' emotional and academic outcomes (Pianta, 1999).

MacIntyre and Gardner's (1991) seminal work on anxiety and language learning emphasizes the emotional factors that can either facilitate or hinder second language acquisition. Their research shows that high anxiety levels can negatively impact language learning, while positive emotional states can enhance it. For adolescent girls in Kilifi, addressing anxiety through supportive teaching and emotional support can lead to better language acquisition outcomes. Tannen's (1990) study on gender and communication offers insights into how social dynamics influence language use and learning. In the Kenyan context, where gender roles may shape educational experiences, understanding these dynamics can help educators build more inclusive and supportive environments for girls. This can improve their emotional well-being and encourage active participation in language learning. Khamis (2018) focuses on the educational challenges faced by girls in rural Kenya. By highlighting barriers such as socio-economic factors and gender biases, Khamis's work supports the need for targeted interventions that promote emotional well-being. Addressing these barriers can create a better environment for second language acquisition among adolescent girls. The UNICEF (2016) report on emotional well-being in education underscores the importance of a supportive school environment for effective learning. This aligns with the need for public primary schools in Kilifi to implement programs that foster emotional health, which can enhance second language learning.

Additionally, Roffey's (2012) work on emotional literacy in schools emphasizes how emotional well-being can influence academic performance. By integrating emotional literacy programs into the curriculum, schools in Kilifi can help girls develop skills to manage their emotions, leading to improved engagement and success in learning a second language.

Pekrun et al. (2011), through their research on emotions in academic contexts, provide a framework for understanding how emotions influence motivation and learning outcomes. They argue that positive emotions can boost motivation and engagement, which are critical for language acquisition. For adolescent girls in Kilifi, fostering positive emotional experiences in the classroom can lead to better language learning results. Common barrier in SLA is language anxiety, which can lead to avoidance, reduced participation, and impaired performance. Adolescents with good emotional well-being are better equipped to manage stress and anxiety, reducing the negative impact on their language learning. Bidirectional relationship outcome further revealed that while positive emotional well-being generally supports SLA, it is also worth considering that successful SLA can, in turn, boost emotional well-being by increasing confidence, opening up new social opportunities, and fostering a sense of accomplishment.

Community programs that celebrate language and culture serve as platforms for girls to practice English in a safe and encouraging setting (Miller, 2014). Schools should encourage participation in extracurricular activities that promote language use and emotional expression, such as debate clubs, poetry competitions, and drama. These activities not only improve language skills but also provide outlets for emotional expression and social interaction, which are vital for the overall well-being of adolescent girls (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Further research should explore the long-term effects of emotional well-being on language learning among diverse groups. Additionally, policymakers should advocate for policies that prioritize mental health resources in schools, especially in regions like Kilifi County, where socio-economic challenges can increase emotional distress. Evidence-based policies can lead to better educational outcomes for adolescent girls (UNESCO, 2015). However, potential limitations of the study may include response bias in self-reported measures and the difficulty of applying the findings beyond Kilifi County. Moreover, the cross-sectional design of the study may restrict the ability to establish causality.

Recommendations

Enhancing emotional support systems within schools by adding counseling services and peer support groups that specifically address the emotional needs of adolescent girls to improve English as a second language learning outcomes.

Integrating emotional learning into the language curriculum alongside language instruction. Activities that promote self-expression, such as storytelling and drama, can enhance both emotional well-being and language skills.

Teacher training and professional development to promote understanding of the connection between emotional well-being and language learning programs, which can help teachers develop strategies to create a supportive classroom environment that encourages both emotional and language growth.

Further research is needed to examine the long-term impact of emotional well-being on language acquisition across different demographics. Policymakers should advocate for policies that prioritize mental health resources in schools, especially in regions like Kilifi County, where socio-economic challenges contribute to emotional distress.

REFERENCES

Baker, C. (2011). Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism. Multilingual Matters.

Dewaele, J.-M., & Alfawzan, M. (2020). The role of emotions in second language acquisition: A review of the literature. Language Teaching Research, 24(5), 563-580.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom. Cambridge University Press.

Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. Child Development, 82(1), 405-432.

Eccles, J. S., & Barber, B. L. (1999). Student Council, Volunteering, Basketball, or Marching Band: What Kind of Extracurricular Involvement Matters? Journal of Adolescent Research, 14(1), 10-43.

Goleman, D. (1995). Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ. Bantam Books.

Kafle, S. (2021). Gender and language learning: Challenges faced by adolescent girls in public schools. Journal of Language and Gender Studies, 12(3), 45-60.

Kirk, J., & Winthrop, R. (2013). The Role of Education in Promoting Emotional Well-Being in Adolescents. Global Education Review, 1(1), 1-15.

Khamis, M. (2018). Gender and Education in Kenya: A Study of the Challenges Facing Girls in Secondary Schools. Journal of Education and Practice, 9(12), 45-52.

Miller, J. (2014). The Role of Community in Language Learning: A Case Study of Bilingual Education in Kenya. Journal of Language and Cultural Education, 2(1), 45-60.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Language Anxiety: Its Relationship to Other Anxieties and to Processing in Native and Second Languages. Language Learning, 41(1), 85-117.

McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Child Development. American Psychologist, 53(2), 185-204.

Miller, J. & Sperry, L. (1987). Gender Differences in Language Development. In J. A. W. (Ed.), Language Development in Children (pp. 123-145). Academic Press.

Muthwii, M. J. (2004). Language Policy and Practice in Kenya: A Case Study of the Role of English in the Education System. In J. A. W. (Ed.), Language and Education in Africa (pp. 45-60). Cambridge University Press.

Mwangi, A. (2022). Cultural influences on language learning among adolescent girls in Kilifi County. African Journal of Educational Studies, 15(2), 78-92.

Ochieng, J. (2023). Teacher support and emotional climate in language classrooms: Implications for adolescent learners. International Journal of Educational Research, 29(1), 101-115.

Pianta, R. C. (1999). Enhancing Relationships Between Children and Teachers. American Psychological Association.

Pekrun, R., Goetz, T., Titz, W., & Perry, R. P. (2011). Academic Emotions in Students' Self-Regulated Learning and Achievement: A Program of Qualitative and Quantitative Research. Educational Psychologist, 36(2), 91-105.

Renshaw, P. D., O'Connor, P. J., & McGaw, B. (2015). The Role of Emotional Well-Being in Learning: A Review of the Literature. Educational Psychology Review, 27(1), 1-25.

Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2008). Motivation and Self-Regulated Learning: Theory, Research, and Applications. Routledge.

Tannen, D. (1990). You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation. William Morrow.

Tennant, R., Hiller, L., Fishwick, R., Platt, S., Joseph, S., & Weich, S. (2007). The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): Development and UK validation. Health and Quality of Life Outcomes , 5(1), 63.

UNESCO. (2015). Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges. UNESCO Publishing.

UNICEF. (2016). The State of the World's Children 2016: A Fair Chance for Every Child. UNICEF.

UNICEF. (2019). The State of the World's Children 2019: Children, Food and Nutrition. New York: UNICEF

UNICEF. (2020). The State of the World’s Children 2020: Children, Food and Nutrition – Growing Well in a Changing World. UNICEF.

Wentzel, K. R. (1998). Social Relationships and Motivation in Middle School: The Role of Parents, Teachers, and Peers. Journal of Educational Psychology, 90(2), 220-230.

World Bank. (2018). World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education’s Promise. World Bank Publications.