

Supernatural Beliefs and Psychological Well-Being among Adolescents: Insights from Secondary School Students in Kenya

Julius Nzambu Kuti¹, Stephen Asatsa (PhD)², Wambua Pius M (PhD)³

^{1,2}Department of Counseling Psychology, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

³Department of Counseling Psychology, Tangaza University

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ABSTRACT

Background: Occult beliefs remain a significant cultural and psychological phenomenon that may influence how adolescents interpret life experiences, cope with challenges, and evaluate their overall well-being. Among secondary school students, understanding the relationship between belief systems and psychological functioning is important for developing culturally appropriate approaches to support adolescent mental health. **Purpose:** This study examined the relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being among secondary school students in Kitui County, Kenya.

Methods: The study employed a cross-sectional correlational design. Data were collected from 250 secondary school students, with 248 valid responses included in the final analysis. Occult beliefs were measured using an adapted version of the Revised Paranormal Belief Scale (RPBS), while subjective well-being was assessed using an adapted Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis in SPSS version 27.

Results: The findings indicated that occult beliefs were prevalent among students, with 61.3% reporting moderate levels and 25.4% reporting strong levels of occult belief. Subjective well-being varied across respondents, with both high and low levels observed. Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant negative relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being ($r = -0.312$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher occult beliefs were associated with lower life satisfaction.

Conclusion: The study concludes that occult beliefs are meaningfully associated with adolescent subjective well-being. Culturally sensitive psychosocial interventions that promote adaptive coping, resilience, and personal agency are recommended within school settings.

Keywords: Occult beliefs; subjective well-being; adolescents; secondary school students; paranormal beliefs; Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Belief systems play an important role in shaping how individuals interpret life experiences, cope with challenges, and evaluate their overall quality of life. Among these belief systems, occult beliefs, which encompass supernatural, mystical, and paranormal ideologies, have attracted increasing attention in psychological research because of their potential influence on mental health and subjective well-being. Subjective well-being refers to individuals' evaluations of their lives, including life satisfaction, positive emotions, and the absence of negative emotional experiences. Previous studies suggest that belief systems can significantly influence psychological functioning, mental health outcomes, and overall life satisfaction (Davis et al., 2020).

Research examining the relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being has produced mixed findings across different cultural contexts. Some studies have associated occult beliefs with increased anxiety, fear, psychological distress, and lower life satisfaction (Rice, 2003; Smith & Jones, 2020; Wiseman & Watt, 2006). Similarly, Rao and Lukose (2019) reported that adolescents who strongly endorsed supernatural beliefs experienced elevated stress and fear-based anxiety. In contrast, other studies have suggested that occult and

related spiritual beliefs may provide individuals with meaning, emotional comfort, resilience, and coping resources during periods of uncertainty (Silva et al., 2022; Agyei & Agyei, 2014, 2016).

Within African societies, occult beliefs remain closely intertwined with traditional cultural and spiritual systems and continue to influence social relationships, health perceptions, and psychological experiences (Nyamongo, 2020; Ohaeri, 2006; Okello & Ndeti, 2013). Although some African studies have linked occult beliefs to fear, anxiety, and psychological distress (Adedoyin et al., 2020; Du Toit & De Wet, 2020), others have reported that cultural and religious interpretations of such beliefs may foster a sense of meaning, belonging, and emotional stability (Agyei & Agyei, 2014, 2016). These inconsistencies suggest that the relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being may be shaped by contextual and cultural factors.

In Kenya, occult beliefs often coexist with traditional cultural practices, contemporary spiritual movements, and religious beliefs (Kamau, 2021). Adolescents may encounter these beliefs through family, peers, media, and community influences during a developmental stage characterized by identity exploration and psychological vulnerability (Omondi, 2019; Bate, 2022). Despite growing interest in adolescent mental health, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the influence of occult beliefs on subjective well-being among secondary school students. This gap is particularly evident in Kitui County, where traditional beliefs such as witchcraft and divination remain culturally significant (Keyes, 2002, 2007). Therefore, this study examined the influence of occult beliefs on subjective well-being among secondary school students in Kitui County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical evidence generally suggests that occult beliefs are associated with poorer subjective well-being among adolescents, although a few studies report some adaptive benefits such as meaning-making and emotional comfort. In the United Kingdom, Thompson and Reed (2018) found that 15% of secondary school students who endorsed occult beliefs reported significantly lower subjective well-being, while 60% of those without such beliefs reported higher well-being. Similar findings were reported in China, where Chen and Zhang (2020) established that 22% of students engaging in occult or superstitious practices experienced lower subjective well-being accompanied by higher anxiety and depression, whereas 70% of students without such beliefs reported better well-being. In Canada, Sullivan and Hill (2021) observed that 18% of students holding occult beliefs reported higher stress and lower subjective well-being, while students utilizing positive coping strategies demonstrated better well-being outcomes. Likewise, Martinez and Garcia (2016) reported that 40% of Spanish adolescents who held occult beliefs experienced lower well-being compared to 60% of students adhering to conventional religious beliefs who reported higher well-being. In India, Kumar and Gupta (2019) found that 60% of adolescents strongly endorsing supernatural beliefs reported lower subjective well-being, although strong social support appeared to buffer these adverse effects.

Additional studies consistently link occult beliefs with emotional distress and reduced life satisfaction. Liu and Zheng (2019) reported that 20% of Taiwanese students holding occult beliefs experienced lower emotional well-being alongside elevated anxiety, depression, and stress. Similar patterns were observed in New Zealand, where Thompson and Clark (2017) found that 25% of students with occult beliefs reported lower subjective well-being and greater anxiety and stress. Studies examining the direct impact of occult beliefs further support these findings. Johnson and Jones (2018) established that beliefs in astrology and witchcraft among American students were associated with lower life satisfaction and higher anxiety, while Smith and Lewis (2019) found that 30% of British students who believed in occult practices reported lower subjective well-being and greater emotional distress. Comparable results were reported in China (Zhou & Liu, 2020), France (Dupont & Thomas, 2021), Japan (Takahashi & Sato, 2017), Germany (Müller & Schmidt, 2018), and South Korea (Kim & Lee, 2020), where occult beliefs were consistently associated with anxiety, emotional instability, stress, and reduced life satisfaction.

Evidence from Africa mirrors the global pattern. In Nigeria, Adebayo and Bello (2019) found that 38% of students who believed in occult practices reported lower life satisfaction, higher anxiety, and greater emotional instability. Similarly, Chukwu and Opara (2018) reported that 40% of students holding occult beliefs experienced lower happiness and emotional well-being. In Ghana, Mensah and Asamoah (2020) found that 45% of students

who believed in occult practices reported lower emotional well-being and higher stress levels, while Osei and Takyi (2021) observed that 37% of students who believed in witchcraft and supernatural forces reported lower life satisfaction and higher anxiety. Comparable findings were reported in South Africa, where occult beliefs were associated with emotional distress, fear, social anxiety, and reduced well-being (Nkosi & Khumalo, 2020; Van der Merwe & Botha, 2018). Nevertheless, some African studies suggest a more complex relationship. Agyei and Agyei (2014, 2016) reported positive associations between spiritual and occult-related beliefs and subjective well-being, arguing that such beliefs may provide meaning, purpose, and psychological comfort. Similarly, Aluko (2015) observed that traditional beliefs could foster social support and belonging while simultaneously contributing to anxiety and depression.

Within Kenya, available studies consistently demonstrate a negative association between occult beliefs and subjective well-being among adolescents. Kamau and Muthoni (2019) reported that 45% of students in Nairobi who believed in occult practices experienced lower life satisfaction and higher anxiety and fear. Muthoni and Kamau (2020) similarly found that 40% of students holding occult beliefs reported lower emotional stability and social well-being. In Kisumu, Wambua and Omondi (2020) established that occult beliefs were a significant predictor of psychological distress, while Munyiri and Mwangi (2021) found that 35% of students endorsing occult beliefs experienced lower happiness and greater anxiety. Comparable findings were reported in Western Kenya (Ochieng & Otieno, 2020), Nyeri (Ndegwa & Wambui, 2020), Nakuru (Waweru & Kibet, 2021; Mwangi & Wanjiru, 2019), and rural Kenya (Kamau & Mutisya, 2020), where occult beliefs were associated with lower life satisfaction, poorer psychological well-being, and increased anxiety, fear, and stress.

Despite the substantial body of evidence linking occult beliefs to lower subjective well-being, important gaps remain. Most studies have been conducted outside Kenya, limiting the generalizability of their findings to the sociocultural context of Kenyan adolescents. Existing Kenyan studies have largely focused on Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru, Mombasa, and other regions, leaving Kitui County largely unexplored. Furthermore, most investigations have relied on quantitative approaches, providing limited insight into students' lived experiences and perceptions. The current study addresses these geographical and methodological gaps by examining the relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being among secondary school students in Kitui County using a mixed-methods approach.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Kleinman's Explanatory Model (Kleinman, 1980), which posits that individuals interpret life experiences, health, and well-being through culturally constructed belief systems. According to the model, people develop explanatory frameworks that help them understand the causes of events, personal challenges, and emotional experiences within their social and cultural environments. These explanatory systems influence how individuals perceive and respond to life circumstances, thereby shaping their psychological well-being.

The model is particularly relevant to the present study because occult beliefs are embedded within cultural and social contexts and may serve as explanatory mechanisms for events such as academic difficulties, interpersonal conflicts, illness, or misfortune. Secondary school students who attribute life experiences to supernatural forces may develop perceptions, emotions, and coping responses that influence their subjective well-being. While such beliefs may provide meaning, comfort, or a sense of control in some circumstances, they may also contribute to fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and psychological distress. Kleinman's framework therefore provides a useful lens for understanding how occult beliefs shape students' interpretations of their experiences and influence their overall well-being. The model informed the assumption that variations in occult beliefs among secondary school students are likely to be associated with differences in subjective well-being. It also supports the study's mixed-methods approach by allowing exploration of both the prevalence of occult beliefs and the meanings students attach to those beliefs within the sociocultural context of Kitui County, Kenya.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional correlational research design to examine the relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being among secondary school students in Kitui County, Kenya. The design was appropriate because it enabled the assessment of the association between the study variables at a single point in time without manipulating any conditions. Cross-sectional correlational designs are widely used in psychological and educational research to determine the direction and strength of relationships among variables within a defined population.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Kitui County, Kenya. The county is predominantly rural and semi-arid and is characterized by strong cultural traditions and belief systems, including beliefs in witchcraft, charms, astrology, and traditional healing practices. Kitui County was selected because occult beliefs remain culturally relevant in many communities and may influence adolescents' perceptions, experiences, and psychological well-being.

Population and Sample Size

The target population comprised 4,418 students drawn from ten purposively selected public secondary schools across five zones of Kitui County. A sample of 250 students was selected using proportionate stratified sampling techniques to ensure adequate representation across the participating schools. Following data screening and cleaning, two questionnaires were excluded because of substantial missing data, resulting in a final analytical sample of 248 students.

Sampling Procedures

The study employed a multistage sampling approach. First, ten public secondary schools were purposively selected from five zones of Kitui County because they were located in areas where occult beliefs were considered culturally prevalent. Second, proportionate stratified sampling was used to select student participants from the sampled schools. This approach ensured that students from different schools were represented according to their population sizes, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

Measures, Validity and Reliability

Occult beliefs were assessed using an adapted version of the Revised Paranormal Belief Scale (RPBS) developed by Irwin (1993). The instrument consisted of items measuring beliefs and experiences related to paranormal and occult phenomena. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating stronger occult beliefs. Subjective well-being was measured using an adapted version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener et al. (1985). The scale comprised seven Likert-type items assessing respondents' evaluations of their life satisfaction and overall well-being. Higher scores reflected higher levels of subjective well-being.

Face and content validity were established through expert review and adaptation of the instruments to suit the study population. The instruments were reviewed by academic supervisors and revised to enhance clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness for secondary school students. A pilot study involving 20 students from Juja Constituency, Kiambu County, was conducted to assess the suitability of the instruments. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The adapted Occult Beliefs Scale yielded a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .81$, while the Subjective Well-Being Scale produced a coefficient of $\alpha = .79$, indicating acceptable reliability. Although the instruments were adapted from previously validated scales, the present study did not assess their factor structure using exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis. Therefore, construct validity was supported through expert review, pilot testing, and evidence from the original validated instruments.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from relevant educational authorities and participating schools. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires during scheduled school visits. For participants

below the age of 18 years, parental or guardian consent was obtained, while student assent was sought before participation. Data were entered, screened, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were computed to summarize the characteristics of the respondents and study variables. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being among the students. Prior to analysis, the dataset was screened for missing values, inconsistencies, and outliers to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), while research authorization was granted by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Additional permission was obtained from the Ministry of Education, the Kitui County Director of Education, and the principals of participating schools. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Informed parental consent and student assent were obtained before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study by excluding identifying information from the questionnaires and securely storing all research data.

RESULTS

Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents the response rate and demographic characteristics of the study participants. Of the 250 questionnaires distributed to secondary school students in Kitui County, all were returned. Following data screening and cleaning, two questionnaires were excluded due to substantial missing data, resulting in a final sample of 248 respondents and an effective response rate of 99.2%. This response rate was considered adequate for statistical analysis and enhanced the reliability of the study findings.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 248)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	84	33.9
	Female	162	65.3
	Prefer not to disclose	2	0.8
Age (years)	Mean (SD)	17.17 (1.01)	
	Median (IQR)	17 (16–18)	
	Range	15–20	
Class Level	Form 2	12	4.8
	Form 3	102	41.1
	Form 4	134	54.0
School Type	Public day school	123	49.6
	Public boarding school	125	50.4
Religious Affiliation	Christian	235	94.8

	Muslim	5	2.0
	Traditional African Religion	8	3.2
Living with Parents/Guardians	Yes	225	90.7
	No	23	9.3
Parents/Guardians Practice Occult Beliefs	Yes	103	41.5
	No	123	49.6
	Not sure	22	8.9

As shown in Table 1, the respondents had a mean age of 17.17 years ($SD = 1.01$), with ages ranging from 15 to 20 years. Female students constituted the majority of the sample, while most respondents were in Forms 3 and 4. The sample was almost equally distributed between public day and public boarding schools. Christianity was the predominant religious affiliation, and the majority of students reported living with their parents or guardians. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that their parents or guardians practiced occult beliefs. Collectively, these characteristics suggest that the study sample adequately represented secondary school students from diverse educational and family backgrounds within Kitui County.

Prevalence of Occult Beliefs

The prevalence of occult beliefs among secondary school students in Kitui County is presented in Table 2. The majority of respondents (61.3%, $n = 152$) reported a moderate level of occult belief, while 25.4% ($n = 63$) exhibited strong occult beliefs. Only 13.3% ($n = 33$) reported no occult beliefs. These findings indicate that occult beliefs are relatively common among the students, with more than three-quarters of the respondents demonstrating either moderate or strong endorsement of occult-related beliefs and experiences.

Table

Overall Prevalence of Occult Beliefs among Respondents

2

Overall Level of Occult Belief	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
No Belief	33	13.3
Moderate Belief	152	61.3
Strong Belief	63	25.4
Total	248	100.0

Table 2 therefore suggests that occult beliefs remain a notable aspect of the social and cultural environment within which many secondary school students in Kitui County are situated. The predominance of moderate levels of belief may indicate that although students are exposed to occult-related ideas and practices, these beliefs are not uniformly or intensely held across the population. Nevertheless, the proportion reporting strong occult beliefs highlights the continued influence of supernatural and paranormal explanations among a substantial segment of adolescents in the county. These findings support concerns raised in previous literature that traditional and occult belief systems continue to shape the perceptions and experiences of young people in many African communities.

Level of Subjective Wellbeing

The levels of subjective well-being among secondary school students in Kitui County are presented in Figure 1. The findings indicate considerable variation in students' perceived life satisfaction and psychological well-being. Approximately 26% of the respondents reported very low subjective well-being, while 12% fell within the low category. Moderate levels of well-being were reported by 22% of the students, whereas 23% and 16% reported

high and very high levels of subjective well-being, respectively. Overall, 39% of the respondents experienced high to very high well-being, while 38% reported low to very low well-being.

Figure 1: *Levels of Subjective Well-Being*

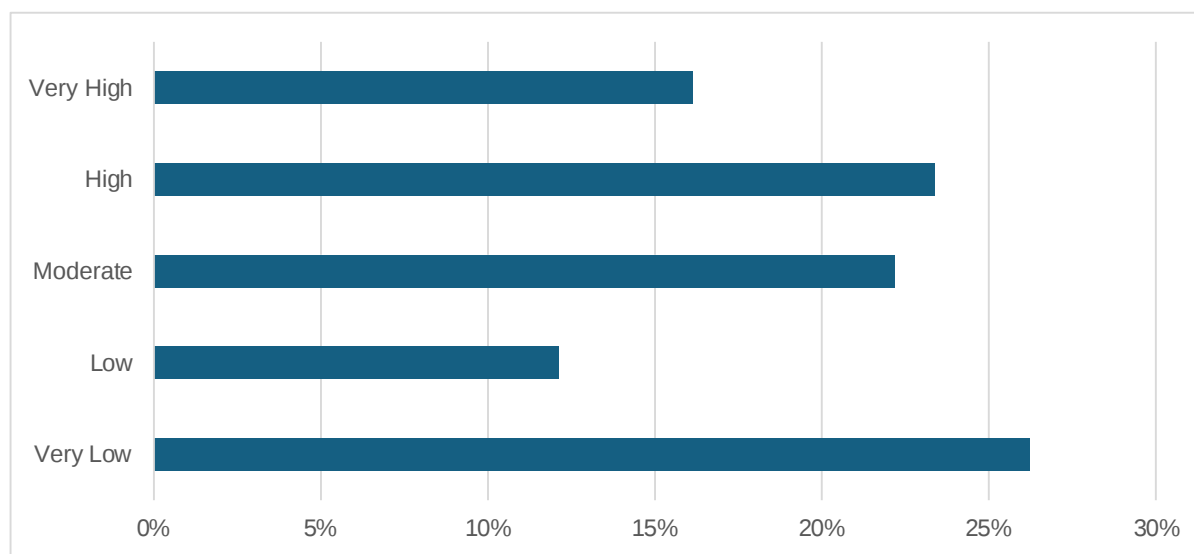


Figure 1 demonstrates that subjective well-being among secondary school students is not uniformly distributed, with students represented across all levels of well-being. Although a substantial proportion of students reported moderate to very high levels of well-being, the sizeable percentage reporting low and very low well-being suggests that many adolescents may be experiencing challenges that affect their life satisfaction and overall psychological functioning. The observed variation highlights the diverse experiences of students within the study setting and underscores the importance of understanding factors associated with subjective well-being among adolescents in Kitui County.

Association of Occult Beliefs on Subjective Well-Being

To understand whether occult beliefs were associated with subjective well-being among secondary school students in Kitui County, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. As presented in Table 3, the results revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being ($r = -0.312$, $p < .001$). This indicates that students who reported stronger occult beliefs were more likely to report lower levels of subjective well-being.

Table

3

Correlation Between Occult Beliefs and Subjective Well-Being

Variables	r	t	df	p-value	95% CI
Occult Beliefs & SWB	-0.312	-5.150	246	<0.001	-0.420 to -0.195

r = Pearson correlation coefficient

t = t-statistic

df = degrees of freedom

CI = 95% confidence interval

The negative correlation suggests that increased endorsement of occult beliefs is associated with reduced life satisfaction and overall psychological well-being. Although the strength of the relationship was moderate, the findings demonstrate that occult beliefs are meaningfully linked to adolescents' well-being within the study

context. The results further suggest that belief systems centered on supernatural explanations for life events may shape how students interpret personal experiences, respond to challenges, and evaluate their overall quality of life.

Table 4 presents the regression analysis examining the extent to which occult beliefs predict subjective well-being among secondary school students. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1,246) = 26.52$, $p < .001$, explaining 9.7% of the variance in subjective well-being ($R^2 = 0.097$). Occult beliefs emerged as a significant negative predictor of subjective well-being ($B = -3.975$, $p < .001$).

Table

Simple Linear Regression of Occult Beliefs Predicting Subjective Well-Being

4

Predictor	B	SE	t	p-value	95% CI
(Intercept)	37.354	2.408	15.51	<0.001	32.611 – 42.098
Occult Total	-3.975	0.772	-5.15	<0.001	-5.495 – -2.455

Model: $SWLS_total = 37.354 - 3.975 \times (Occult_total)$.
 $R^2 = 0.09733$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.09366$, $F(1,246) = 26.52$, $p < 0.001$.

The regression coefficient indicates that a one-unit increase in occult belief scores was associated with an average decrease of approximately 3.98 points in subjective well-being scores. These findings suggest that occult beliefs have a measurable negative influence on students' life satisfaction and psychological well-being. While occult beliefs account for a modest proportion of the variation in subjective well-being, the significant effect demonstrates that belief systems constitute an important factor associated with adolescent well-being. The remaining unexplained variance indicates that other social, familial, educational, and personal factors also contribute substantially to students' subjective well-being.

DISCUSSION

Prevalence of Occult Beliefs among Secondary School Students

The study found that occult beliefs were common among secondary school students in Kitui County, with the majority of respondents (61.3%) demonstrating moderate levels of occult belief and 25.4% reporting strong levels of belief. This suggests that occult-related ideas form part of the broader belief systems through which adolescents interpret experiences, uncertainties, and events within their social environment. The predominance of moderate belief may indicate that many students engage with occult explanations to varying degrees rather than adopting them as exclusive interpretations of reality. During adolescence, individuals undergo significant cognitive and identity development, which may involve exploring different explanations about life, personal experiences, and the world around them (Steinberg, 2019).

The presence of occult beliefs among students may also reflect the influence of cultural transmission, family narratives, peer interactions, and community practices. Within Kleinman's Explanatory Model, health, behaviour, and personal experiences are understood through culturally shaped systems of meaning that guide how individuals interpret events (Kleinman, 1980). In contexts where supernatural explanations remain socially recognized, adolescents may incorporate such beliefs into their understanding of challenges, success, misfortune, and personal experiences. The findings are consistent with studies indicating that paranormal and supernatural beliefs remain present among young populations across different cultural settings, often existing alongside religious and scientific explanations (Rutjens et al., 2020; Thalbourne & Delin, 2021). These findings highlight the importance of understanding adolescent beliefs within their cultural context rather than interpreting them solely as individual-level cognitive preferences.

Subjective Well-Being among Secondary School Students

The study established considerable variation in subjective well-being among secondary school students in Kitui County. Although 45% of students reported moderate to very high levels of well-being, a substantial proportion (38%) experienced low or very low subjective well-being. This pattern indicates that while many students maintain satisfactory levels of life satisfaction, a notable group may be experiencing psychological or social challenges that affect their overall evaluation of life. Differences in well-being may be associated with variations in family support, academic experiences, peer relationships, socioeconomic circumstances, and individual coping resources.

These findings are consistent with research demonstrating that adolescent well-being is associated with multiple interacting personal and social factors. Nguyen et al. (2021) observed that adolescent life satisfaction is related to psychological resources, interpersonal relationships, and environmental conditions, while Orben et al. (2020) emphasized that adolescence represents a sensitive developmental period in which social experiences are closely associated with psychological outcomes. From the perspective of the Health Belief Model, students' perceptions of their circumstances and available coping resources may be related to how they evaluate their well-being (Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1988). The findings therefore suggest the need for school-based interventions that strengthen resilience, social support systems, and mental health awareness among adolescents

Relationship between Occult Beliefs and Subjective Well-Being

The study found a significant negative relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being, with higher levels of occult belief associated with lower life satisfaction ($r = -0.312$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, regression analysis indicated that occult beliefs were significantly associated with subjective well-being, accounting for 9.7% of the variation in students' life satisfaction. These findings suggest that occult beliefs are related to adolescents' interpretations of their experiences and evaluations of their quality of life, although the cross-sectional design does not permit causal conclusions.

The negative association may be understood through Kleinman's Explanatory Model, which proposes that cultural belief systems shape how individuals explain and respond to life events (Kleinman, 1980). Strong endorsement of occult explanations may, in some contexts, be associated with greater reliance on external forces when interpreting challenges, which may coincide with differences in perceptions of control and personal agency. Similarly, the Health Belief Model suggests that individual beliefs are related to perceptions of vulnerability, coping ability, and expected outcomes (Rosenstock et al., 1988). Beliefs that emphasize unpredictable external influences may therefore be associated with how individuals perceive their capacity to manage difficulties.

The findings correspond with previous studies linking stronger paranormal or supernatural beliefs with less favourable psychological outcomes. Anderson and Brown (2020) reported that higher paranormal belief was associated with increased anxiety and reduced life satisfaction, while Lee et al. (2022) found that stronger supernatural belief systems were related to lower psychological adjustment and resilience. However, the present findings should not be interpreted as indicating that occult beliefs directly cause reduced well-being, since the cross-sectional design only establishes association. It is possible that reduced well-being may also influence individuals' tendency to seek supernatural explanations, or that other contextual factors contribute to both belief patterns and psychological outcomes.

The findings have important implications for adolescent mental health support and educational practice. Schools should recognize that students' belief systems are shaped by cultural and social environments and should therefore approach sensitive beliefs with respect and cultural awareness. Support strategies should focus on strengthening adaptive coping skills, personal agency, critical thinking, and access to psychosocial support while acknowledging the cultural meanings attached to students' experiences. Future research using longitudinal or mixed-methods designs could further clarify the direction of this relationship and examine the potential influence of factors such as religiosity, family functioning, socioeconomic status, mental health history, and academic stress on the relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being among secondary school students in Kitui County, Kenya. The findings demonstrated that occult beliefs were relatively common among students, with most respondents reporting moderate levels of belief. The study also established variations in subjective well-being, with a considerable proportion of students experiencing moderate to high well-being, while a notable group reported low levels of life satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of understanding adolescent beliefs and psychological experiences within their cultural and social contexts.

The study further established a significant negative relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being, indicating that higher levels of occult belief were associated with lower life satisfaction. Occult beliefs also significantly predicted subjective well-being, although they represented only one of the factors influencing students' psychological outcomes. The findings emphasize the need for culturally sensitive approaches in supporting adolescent well-being, incorporating psychosocial support, resilience development, and awareness of the various belief systems that shape students' interpretations of their experiences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed. Schools should strengthen psychosocial support programmes that promote students' emotional well-being, resilience, and adaptive coping strategies. Guidance and counselling departments should create safe and culturally sensitive spaces where students can discuss personal beliefs, fears, and life challenges without judgment. Counsellors should integrate approaches that enhance students' sense of personal agency, critical thinking, and effective problem-solving while respecting the cultural backgrounds that influence their belief systems.

Parents and guardians should provide supportive home environments characterized by open communication, guidance, and positive engagement with adolescents' experiences and concerns. Since family and community contexts influence young people's beliefs and interpretations of life events, parents should encourage constructive discussions about cultural beliefs while promoting healthy coping mechanisms. Policymakers in education and child welfare sectors should consider strengthening school-based mental health initiatives and incorporating culturally appropriate psychological support services within secondary schools.

Future researchers should consider longitudinal studies to examine the direction of the relationship between occult beliefs and subjective well-being over time. Further studies may also explore the influence of other factors, such as family support, religiosity, academic stress, peer relationships, and socioeconomic conditions, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of adolescent well-being within culturally diverse settings.

Limitations of the Study

This study had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design limited the ability to establish causal relationships between occult beliefs and subjective well-being. Although the findings demonstrated a significant association between the two variables, the design does not determine whether occult beliefs influence well-being over time or whether variations in well-being contribute to differences in belief patterns. Future longitudinal or mixed-methods studies would provide deeper insights into the direction and development of this relationship.

Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may have been influenced by participants' personal perceptions, social desirability, or reluctance to disclose sensitive beliefs related to occult practices. Although confidentiality and anonymity were emphasized, some respondents may have adjusted their responses based on perceived social or cultural expectations. In addition, the study did not examine other factors that may be associated with both occult beliefs and subjective well-being, including religiosity, family functioning, socioeconomic status, and mental health history. Future studies should incorporate these variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the observed associations. Finally, the study was conducted among secondary school students in Kitui County, Kenya, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to students in other regions with different cultural, religious, and social contexts. Future studies involving broader

geographical areas and diverse populations would enhance understanding of occult beliefs and adolescent well-being across different settings.

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