



Out-of-School Mentorship and Positive Youth Development among Secondary Students in Kibra, Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Even though youth make up a large portion of Kenya's population, many lack opportunities for full development, which limits their social, economic, and personal growth. This study explored how out-of-school youth mentorship is associated with positive youth development (PYD) among secondary school students in Kibra, Nairobi County. The focus was on mentor support and individual traits. We used a cross-sectional convergent parallel design targeting 3560 youths enrolled in ten community-based mentorship programmes. A total of 349 programme participants and 102 non-participants took part. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and logistic regression. Qualitative data from 10 key informants and seven focus groups were thematically analyzed. The findings showed that high mentorship participation is linked to higher PYD: 97% of highly involved students reported high PYD versus 33% among low-involvement students. Programme involvement was a stronger predictor ($\beta = 0.287$) than community engagement ($\beta = 0.243$). Mentorship also boosted traits like school connectedness (97.4%), goal orientation (95.1%), motivation (94%), collaboration (91.4%), and faith (98.3%), with school connectedness, goal orientation, and collaboration being the strongest predictors ($\beta = 0.32, 0.21, 0.184$; $R^2 = 0.555$, $p < 0.001$). Qualitative insights reinforced these results, showing that structured guidance, role modelling, and parental support strengthen students' social, emotional, and cognitive growth. The study indicates that participation in mentorship programmes, alongside parental support, appears crucial for fostering holistic PYD among secondary students in urban informal settlements in Kenya.

Subject Areas

Elderly Education

Keywords

Youth, Mentorship, Out-of-School Programmes, Secondary School Students, Kibra, Kenya

1. Introduction

Positive Youth Development (PYD) has come into being as an integrated model of developing youth well-being, resilience, and competence. Lerner's model focuses on six interconnected areas, competence, confidence, connection, character, caring, and contribution, that collectively nurture thriving youth who can make positive contributions to society [1]. PYD approaches have been shown to mitigate adverse outcomes such as substance abuse, delinquency, school dropout, and poor mental health, particularly in under-resourced communities [2] [3]. Out-of-school mentorship programs, as vehicles of PYD, provide supportive environments that promote socio-emotional growth, transferable skills, and youth agency, helping adolescents navigate structural inequities associated with poverty and systemic marginalization [4].

In Kenya, informal settlements such as Kibra host a disproportionately high youth population facing overcrowding, poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education and technology [5]. These conditions contribute to elevated rates of school dropout, juvenile delinquency, and limited labor market readiness. While the government has established frameworks for youth development and education, persistent skills gaps, particularly in socio-cognitive and transferable competencies, hamper youth employability and sustainable economic growth [6]. Empirical evidence also indicates that mentorship programs foster life skills, academic motivation, and psychosocial well-being [4] [7], yet research on structured out-of-school mentorship in Kenya remains limited [8].

The scientific problem addressed in this study is the insufficient empirical understanding of how participation in out-of-school mentorship programs influences the positive development of secondary school students in under-resourced contexts. Specifically, there is limited evidence on the role of mentorship in cultivating transferable skills, life skills, and youth agency that align with labor market demands and sustainable development goals. Comprehension of these interconnections is critical in framing an intervention that actually closes the gap between potential and possibility for young people, especially under circumstances of systemic disadvantage and limited resources.

The general objective of this study is to explore the influence of out-of-school mentorship programs on the positive development of secondary school students in Kibra, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to capture both measurable outcomes and nuanced experiences of youth engaged in mentorship activ-

ities.

The article starts with a review of literature on Positive Youth Development, youth mentorship, and transferable skills-providing the theoretical and practical background for conducting the study. It proceeds to thoroughly describe the methodology used in the research, declaring the research design, population, sampling, and data collection methods. Lastly, findings are given and interpreted as being affected by out-of-school mentorship on youth development. The research concludes by connecting the findings to practice and policy and providing recommendations on how to improve youth mentorship programs in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This section contains the critique of the theoretical review of existing literature on the relationship between out-of-school mentorship and the influence of positive youth development, in this study, secondary school students. Then, the empirical review of relevant literature, the conceptual framework, a summary of the chapter, and the research gaps are presented.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework and Rhodes's conceptual model of youth mentorship are the two complementary frameworks that inform this study. Both frameworks provide a window to see how out-of-school mentorship programs affect secondary school students' social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development in Kibra. PYD targets youth strength development, assets, and capability in positive environments, while Rhodes' model delineates how processes work so that mentorship relationships activate the assets. Using both models allows the research to access the multi-dimensional, contextual, and relational nature of youth development.

PYD emerged as a reaction to the early 20th-century deficit model that thought about at-risk youth primarily in terms of deficits such as bad grades, delinquency, or mental health risk [9]. The exclusive focus of this model on remediation limited intervention effectiveness, resulting in the development of asset-based models with a focus on resilience, competence, and positive engagement. The 5Cs/6Cs model by Lerner is central to PYD, imagining youth development along the lines of competence, confidence, connection, character, caring, and contribution [1] [10]. All are interconnected in that gaps or discontinuities in one can undermine developmental progress overall, a caution to programs targeting discrete competencies separate from the greater ecology.

Contextual determinants are central to PYD. Developmental assets operate across families, schools, out-of-school settings, and communities, including with non-parent adults such as mentors [11]. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory continues to emphasize the manner in which individual competencies in-

teract with systems within the environment to create outcomes. Yet, practical and methodological issues emerge: the majority of PYD studies are cross-sectional, constraining causal inference, and measurement tools with known validity tend to come from Western settings, which poses challenges to construct validity in marginalized urban environments such as Kibra [12]. Mixed-methods approaches are thus critical to triangulate evidence and assess local subtleties.

Rhodes' conceptual model complements PYD by focusing on the mentorship relationship itself as a bi-directional, individually tailored process that improves social, cognitive, and identity development [13]. Mentorship operates through establishing social interaction and emotional health, cognitive skill development, and supporting identity development. Evidence suggests that long-term, high-quality, trust-based mentoring improves academic performance, social-emotional abilities, and goal-directed behavior [14]. Yet, the model also suggests danger: short, inconsistent, or culturally incongruent mentorship may have small or even adverse effects. The key to success lies in mentor ability, program structure, mentee attributes, and contextual relevance [15] [16].

Integration of PYD and Rhodes' model enables a detailed assessment of out-of-school mentorship programs in Kibra. PYD specifies the strengths that youths bring [9], and Rhodes describes how the processes through which the mentorship relationship serves to activate and amplify these strengths [17]. This integrated system guides the study's focus on mentee growth, impact on the mentor, and parental and environmental influences. However, it is hard to distinguish between mentorship effects and home and community effects, and causal attribution is always limited, particularly with cross-sectional designs. Interventions that fail to hold constant these interactions could overestimate their impact on youth development.

Parental support is an essential moderating factor within this model. Active, safe parental engagement can serve as a buffer to poverty, crime, and limited education, complementing the advantages of mentorship [18] [19]. Parental engagement as a foundation is subject to variability that cannot be managed by mentorship initiatives. Parental variation in capacity, availability, and values can yield unequal outcomes for mentees, and therefore, the significance of interventions that are responsive to diverse home settings as opposed to an assumption of a homogeneous level of support.

In total, the intersection of PYD and Rhodes' model offers a sound theory-based framework with which to examine out-of-school mentorship programs in Kibra. It highlights individual strengths, relational processes, and environmental context as intertwined factors impacting youth outcomes. In doing so, however, it identifies key limitations: measurement problems, cross-sectional constraints, variation in the quality of mentorship, and contextual dependencies. Though the framework provides a coherent foundation for conceptualizing how mentorship might be used to foster competence, confidence, social-emotional skills, and civic engagement, outcomes must be treated with caution, noting that positive development is context-dependent, contingent, and not absolute.

2.3. Youth Mentorship: Pathways, Approaches, and Contextual Dynamics

Young people's mentorship is a crucial driver of increased employability and equipping young people with the competencies to effectively enter the labor market. While there is international evidence of what it can do to build human capital, mentorship in Kenya remains somewhat underdeveloped and scattered. According to [20], achieving a critical mass of employable youth requires a government-led framework that unites existing activities and mainstream mentorship into national policy on youth development. Unless the programs complement one another, they can be inconsistent, redundant, and specific in their reach, particularly in slums.

Effective mentorship depends on the presence of supportive adults who are able to guide young people through development milestones. Research identifies three relational influences: parents, non-parental adults such as relatives or community adults, and grandparents who play a middle position in African families, most notably single-parent families. Parents shape values, beliefs, and behavior, but non-parental adults can replace or complement parental influence by providing economic, educational, and emotional support [21]. This support is essential for all youth, but particularly essential for adolescents in high-risk settings where there are few positive role models. This puts forward the power of mentorship as a way to compensate for a lack of support from family or community.

Mentorship can be formal or informal, and these distinctions are pertinent to developmental effects. Formal mentorship, often through school- or community-based programs, applies planned pairing, measurable goals, and documented participation. Activities may be in the way of workshops, recreation activities, or community service, on a group or individual basis [12]. Formal systems provide maintenance, accountability, and boundary protection but are costly, potentially resulting in power imbalances or limiting flexibility. Unplanned informal mentoring, however, arises naturally within social networks from intimate family, neighbors, or friends and provides guidance, modeling, and support without direct oversight [22]. Although this approach is associated with availability and adaptability, it is vulnerable to variability and differential relational quality [7].

Mentorship approaches also differ as development or prescriptive. Developmental mentorship is centered around guidance, mutual setting of goals, and mentee independence that breeds trust and shared investment, whereas prescriptive mentorship is directive and goal-oriented [23]. Evidence favors developmental styles. For instance, [24] demonstrated that 90% of developmental mentor-mentee relationships thrived after 18 months compared to only 30% of prescriptive relationships. Likewise, [25] achieved higher satisfaction and quality in developmental mentorships. Still, developmental approaches require the availability and continuity of mentors, which may not be feasible in low-resource environments, making situational adaptation all the more important.

Blending formal and informal elements, hybrid models are becoming extremely

prevalent, particularly in Kibra Sub-County. Hybrid programs combine structured objectives, mentor training, and group mentoring to create reach without compromising relational depth [26]. Formal aspects allow for accountability and concrete results, but informal ones allow for spontaneous mentoring and youth-initiated participation. Challenges persist, however, like limited supply of mentors, limited resources, and child protection issues [27] [28]. Research shows that poor mentor-mentee matches can have detrimental effects, as illustrated by 41% boost in depressive symptoms and 30% boost in delinquency where formal mentoring relationships failed to “gel” [29].

Empirical studies consistently link mentorship to PYD with various dimensions. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America’s formal program is a case in point, with improvements in social-emotional well-being, academic achievement, and pro-social behavior [30]. Organized mentorship in Kibra improves caring, attachment, and socio-emotional skill, and reduces school dropout early [27] [31]. Informal mentoring improves these outcomes through empowerment, motivation, and decision-making, though inconsistency can limit long-term benefits [32] [33]. Equilibrium between formal and informal aspects is therefore necessary for PYD long-term influence.

Kibra out-of-school mentorship programs in the community are hybrid interventions, often incorporating group mentoring, arts, sports, and vocational training. These programs offer safe environments for school days or recesses, enabling individual development, collaboration, and the development of resilience [34]. While these kinds of programs provide essential protective factors, there are gaps in establishing the determinants of high-quality mentorship-mentee relationships, the relative significance of hybrid compared to formal or informal mentorship, and long-term effects on youth employability and psychosocial outcomes.

Generally, Kenyan youth mentorship is promising and nuanced. Formal approaches offer structure, accountability, and quantifiable effect at the cost of investing heavily in program infrastructure and quality of mentors. Informal mentorship is more accessible, flexible, and empowering, but at risk of unevenness and episodic effect. Hybrid approaches, as experienced in Kibra, are a practical response to local context and combine structure with opportunistic relational moments. For policy and practice, evidence underlines the significance of relational quality, sustained commitment, and alignment with youth development needs, recognizing the limitations of context and practical issues that affect the effectiveness of mentorship.

2.4. Empirical Review: Out-of-School Youth Mentorship and Positive Youth Development

The success of youth mentorship in achieving developmental outcomes has much to do with the quality and nature of the mentor-mentee relationship. Developmental, youth-directed mentorship is a consistent involvement that creates desired results, whereas prescriptive, power-over approaches fail to endure in the

long term. Research has shown that less than 30% of prescriptive mentorship lasted beyond 18 months, whereas 90% of developmental mentorship persisted and produced measurable improvements in social-emotional and decision-making skills [24]. These findings affirm the importance of trust, respect, and autonomy of the mentees. However, this research took place under stable institutions, and the same persistence may be harder to achieve in informal settlements where socio-economic uncertainty and unavailability of mentors prevail, implying a contextual limitation in the generalizability of these findings more broadly.

Mentor-mentee relationship quality also mediates long-term participation and developmental outcomes. Research by [25] depicted how developmental mentorship led to higher satisfaction and stronger relational ties than did directive models, emphasizing autonomy, decision-making, and active participation. Even though the outcomes affirm the advantages of youth-led practice, the study did not properly depict extraneous variables such as family obligations or economic limitations that could disrupt ongoing engagement. This suggests that even well-designed mentorship interventions are bound to fail in the presence of structural or socio-economic barriers.

Mentorship programs that feature a highly structured approach exemplify a model that documents Positive Youth Development that is framed with expectations and accountability for achieving goals. A study by [27] reports effectiveness for roughly 70% - 80% of the young people they serve, notably in regard to caring, connection, and character development. While structure is critical for consistency and for purposefully learning skills that can be measured, structured mentors can also limit flexibility, decrease autonomy, and lead to disengagement. There is inherent tension between structure and responsiveness, and leveraging one to improve the other may require a more adaptive design that retains measurable goals while including a focus on the needs of each mentee, especially in a changing community context.

Even within these highly structured programs, quality of the relationships is the most significant indicator of effectiveness. As documented by [31] in a 3-year longitudinal study where at-risk youths were matched to institutional mentors like school teachers, youth pairings who had an authoritarian or unsupportive relationship with their mentor were more likely to develop behaviors related to depression or delinquency than if the relationship was supportive. The mere presence of a mentor is not enough to create positive outcomes for youth; they also must employ interpersonal thrust and focus on the quality of the relationship. In fact, scaling up these programs exacerbates this already problematic issue: high-quality mentoring relationships are difficult to maintain within programs that are large or lacking in resources, and program effectiveness, as a measure of the relationship's impact, diminishes as the cost and scale of programming increase.

Ongoing involvement in youth programming enhances growth through improved problem-solving skills, social competence, and resilience. [35] found that developmental gains are measurable with active engagement. Engaging youth in

low-resource environments is more difficult because of competing demands and outside factors. When programming is not intentionally designed for long-term participation, there is a danger of simply superficial participation will not be maintained over time and reduced impact on programming. Extracurricular activities can support mentorship by providing concrete life opportunities to practice communication, collaboration, and life skills. [36] found that taking part in structured extracurricular activities creates positive development in these life competencies. Still, programs can be overloaded, mentoring can be untrained, and the resources needed to learn can be inadequate for individualized youth learning. Access is not enough; the quality of programming creates developmental change. When designed correctly, community-based practices can build youth agency and social responsibility. Specifically [37], cites civic engagement as a positive development in competence, connection, caring, and character. On the other hand, inappropriately engaged community involvement can limit youth agency, social connectedness, caring, and character development. For instance, an unsafe environment, poorly supervised community activity, and misassigned or resource-limited qualities in a community-based practice can lead to ineffective programming. If community-based activity is designed and contextually aligned, youth can grow in development surrounding their social change work.

Hybrid mentorship models seek to bring together both the amplitude of impact associated with formal programs and the relational quality of informal ones. While [26] notes that these types of designs expand access to mentorship, risks exist that relationship quality is diminished, and therefore development impact is lower than would be possible with one-to-one informal mentoring relationships. It continues to be a challenge and a priority for practitioners who want meaningful outcomes to find a balance between scale and depth.

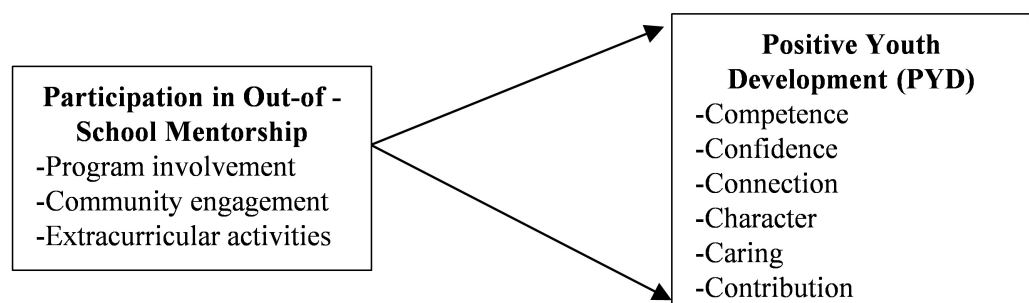
Mentorship intervention programs can offer opportunities to avert negative social outcomes, but their impact is always dependent on local contexts and other limitations. For example, [30] showed that structured mentoring programs improved social-emotional functioning, academic performance, and pro-social behavior to a positive yet qualified degree. The majority of those mentorship interventions were from well-resourced contexts, and there is simply a lack of research on ways to transfer effective mentorship programs to settings that are both less resourced or have high risk. Importantly, even mentorship models that can be demonstrated to be effective may not lead to impact in their consideration of context or transfer/break.

Pulling these studies together, the trend is evident: Positive Youth Development through mentorship is dependent upon relational quality, program structure, and contextual fit. Developmental, youth-centered approaches consistently have long-term effects, whereas prescriptive or shallow interventions may produce short- or no-effects whatsoever. Formal programs provide structure and accountability but must be adaptable, whereas informal mentorship allows access but not reliability. Extracurricular activity and community program participation are also associated

with development, but are contingent on program quality, mentor competence, and context relevance. Effective youth development requires an integration of structured monitoring, depth of relationship, contextualization, and longitudinal engagement. Otherwise, mentorship interventions are at risk of thin or patchy outcomes, particularly in challenging or impoverished communities.

2.5. Conceptual Framework of Out-of-School Mentorship Programmes on Positive Youth Development

The framework for this study identifies Participation in Out-of-School Mentorship as the main independent variable, which includes program involvement, community involvement, and extracurricular involvement. Parental support is viewed as an important context, given the ability of the family to support youth Participation and wellbeing, and is demonstrated through economic support, communication, home context, connectedness, and overall active engagement in the child's life. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is the dependent variable of this framework, conceptualized through Lerner's 5Cs/6Cs model: competence, confidence, connection, character, caring, and contribution. The framework draws on the PYD approach to youth, conceptualizing youth as agents with strengths that can be harnessed through planned interactions and supports. The framework is also informed by Rhodes's conceptual model of mentorship, specifically how relational processes, including trust, guidance, role modeling, and reciprocity, relate to developmental outcomes. Each of these models collectively highlights that when youth have opportunities for structured mentorship, with enabling family and social scenarios, they are likely to develop in multidimensional ways, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.



Source: Conceptualized by Author (2024).

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

3. Methodology

The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach to investigate the associations between youth's participation in out-of-school mentorship programmes and Positive Youth Development (PYD) among adolescents living in Kibra Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. Qualitative and quantitative data collection occurred simultaneously at the same level of significance to allow for triangulation

to support the findings [38] [39]. Therefore, the design contributed to the understanding of how seeing and experiencing the mentorship context indexed, and adapted a view of the six quality PYD elements of competence, confidence, connection, character, caring, and contribution.

The target population comprised 3560 adolescents in Forms 1 - 4 registered across ten community-based organisations (CBOs) offering mentorship programmes in Kibra. Projects were stratified by group membership, and systematic random sampling was used to select respondents proportionate to each site's size. Based on Taro Yamane's formula with a 5% margin of error, the required sample size was $n = 359$.

Programme participants ($n = 349$) were selected by systematic random sampling from CBO membership lists proportional to site size; non-participants ($n = 102$) were recruited by convenience from church youth groups during fieldwork. This brought the total valid responses to 451, representing a 94% overall response rate (97% among programme participants and 85% among non-participants). Eligible respondents were adolescents enrolled in Forms 1 - 4 who provided written assent and obtained parental consent before taking part in the study. Programme participants were further required to have at least one year of mentorship experience, while non-participants were drawn from similar age groups within church-based youth groups to serve as comparison cases.

Quantitative measures included programme participation, mentor support, individual characteristics, parental support, community engagement, and PYD outcomes. Programme involvement was measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 - 5), pilot Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.727$. Community engagement used 5 items ($\alpha = 0.701$). Parental support used 37 items ($\alpha = 0.918$). PYD used 42 items across the Six Cs (overall $\alpha = 0.905$; subscale α 0.734 - 0.857). Mentor support was evaluated using a measure consisting of 10 items, which was modified from Duisenbayev *et al.* (2024) ($\alpha = 0.91$), while self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (10 items) ($\alpha = 0.87$). The measures were checked through a pilot study in Kawangware to evaluate the clarity of the language, cultural relevance, and reliability of the measures. Revisions were made to refine the language of the items, the flow of the administration, and the logistics accompanying the main survey.

The qualitative part comprised 15 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 10 key informant interviews (KIIs) with project managers. To value the polarity of experiences that young people may face in their involvement in the project, focus group discussions were both gender-mixed and gender-ed. The participants were purposely selected among those who had been active mentees for no less than a year. Research assistants constructed detailed handwritten notes that they validated locals' expressions they had written down in the local language.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression models to assess associations between programme participation, mentor support, and PYD outcomes. Qualitative data were analysed thematically to

explain and contextualize the quantitative findings. Integration followed a joint-display approach, allowing convergence between numeric results and participant narratives. The mixed-methods design thus captured both the measurable and lived dimensions of mentorship influence on adolescent development in Kibra's informal settlements [40].

Ethical approval was provided by St. Paul's University Ethical Review Committee (ISERC) and NACOSTI. Parental consent and participants' assent were obtained in writing, and pseudonymization provided confidentiality. Research assistants were guided by ethics guidelines and child protection guidelines. There was close supervision during data collection with verification by attendance lists and mentor logs to reduce measurement error. Together, the convergent parallel design afforded a high-powered approach to assessing correlational associations between participating in the mentorship programme, mentor support and PYD outcomes, whereas the qualitative results informed the interpretation and were enriching to understand the young person's experience living in the informal settlement of Kibra [41].

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Introduction

This section outlines the study's findings effective in combining both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the relationship between participation in out-of-school youth mentorship programmes and positive youth development (PYD) in Kibra Sub-County. Data were collected through surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), and individual interviews, achieving a strong overall response rate of 94%, which further strengthens the integrity of the study's findings (Babbie, 2020). The findings are presented in succession: descriptive statistics, crosstabulations, multivariate analysis, and qualitative findings. Overall, the integrated approach provides a framework for ensuring the results that are presented are both statistically valid and grounded in context.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

This section offers a comprehensive depiction of youth engagement in out-of-school mentorship programmes in Kibra Sub-County. It specifically focuses on involvement in the programme as well as their involvement in the community and adds emphasis on related positive youth development (PYD). The data are presented descriptively through percentages, means, and standard deviations. All findings are based on 349 respondents to the survey.

4.2.1. Youth Membership in the Out-of-School Youth Mentorship Programme

The first independent variable explored is participation in the out-of-school youth mentorship programme, including roles taken by participants and parental support as a moderating influence on PYD. Findings are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Youth membership in mentorship programme.

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Attendance frequency		
Once weekly	22	6.3%
Twice weekly	12	3.4%
Three times weekly	3	0.9%
Only during school holiday	307	88%
Role in the programme		
Choir leader	9	2.6%
Praise and worship	98	28.1%
Leaders	199	57%
Just a participant	18	5.2%
Class prefect	21	6%

Source: Author's Survey Data, 2024.

Results indicate high programme attendance, with 88% of respondents participating primarily during school holidays. Frequency of attendance outside holidays was minimal: 6.3% once weekly, 3.4% twice weekly, and 0.9% three times weekly. Leadership roles were prevalent, with 57% of youth serving as programme leaders, 28.1% participating in praise and worship teams, 6% as class prefects, 5.2% as regular participants, and 2.6% as choir leaders (**Table 1**).

Programme involvement also extended to participants' perceptions of educational and personal development outcomes (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on program involvement.

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
I think participating in the programme will help me continue my education.	6	5.2	0	57	31.8	4.034	1.032
I learn a lot from participating in the programme.	2.6	0.6	10.6	51.6	34.7	4.155	0.819
Staff at the programme pay attention to what's going on in my life.	0.6	0.3	2.3	27.8	69.1	4.648	0.587
Staff in the programme listen to what I have to say.	0.3	0.9	1.4	37.2	60.2	4.561	0.604
The programme has nurtured my goal-setting skills.	4.6	9.2	20.3	37.5	28.4	3.759	1.1
I feel I have voice/power to influence decisions about the programme.	4.6	5.7	22.3	41.3	26.1	3.786	1.039
There is at least one staff member I can go to for support with a problem.	2	4.3	10.9	44.7	38.1	4.126	0.909

Source: Author's Survey Data, 2024.

On a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), 88.8% strongly agreed that programme participation would support continued education, and 86.3% strongly agreed that they had gained substantial learning from the programme. Respondents also indicated high levels of attention from programme staff: 69.1% strongly agreed that staff paid attention to their lives, and 60.2% strongly agreed that staff listened to them. The mentorship programme was reported to nurture goal-setting skills, with 28.4% strongly agreeing and 37.5% agreeing that their skills improved. Regarding agency in decision-making, 26.1% strongly agreed and 41.3% agreed that they had influence over programme decisions. Finally, 82.47% strongly agreed that they could identify at least one staff member to support them with challenges. Mean scores and standard deviations further highlight central tendencies and dispersion: for example, the item “Staff at the programme pay attention to what’s going on in my life” had a mean of 4.648 (SD = 0.587), indicating consistent high agreement, while “The programme has nurtured my goal-setting skills” had a lower mean of 3.759 (SD = 1.1), reflecting greater variability in responses.

4.2.2. Community Engagement in the Mentorship Programme

Community engagement was measured by participants’ perceptions of programme impact on interactions with peers, family, and the broader community (Table 3). While community engagement is positively perceived, continuous PYD analysis indicates that these activities alone are less strongly associated with developmental outcomes than structured programme involvement. Respondents reported substantial positive effects: 46.7% agreed and 37.2% strongly agreed that programme participation affected how people in their community treated them. Similarly, 37.5% agreed and 35.5% strongly agreed that the programme collaborated with schools to provide community services. Engagement also influenced participants’ own behaviors, with 45.3% agreeing and 42.4% strongly agreeing that their treatment of neighborhood members improved. Integration with family activities was moderate, with 37.8% strongly agreeing and 40.7% agreeing that family involvement was encouraged. Notably, 75.4% strongly agreed that the programme provided structured opportunities for community service (Table 3).

Mean scores support these findings: participants rated “The programme has had a positive influence on how I treat people from my neighborhood” at a mean of 4.241 (SD = 0.842), suggesting strong and consistent perceived behavioral impact. Items such as “The programme and my school work together to offer activities and services” had a lower mean of 3.824 (SD = 1.233), highlighting variability and potential gaps in school-programme collaboration. These findings suggest that while the programme appears effective in fostering educational engagement, mentorship, and community-oriented behaviors, targeted improvements may be needed to increase consistent engagement outside holidays, strengthen school collaborations, and standardize skill development across participants.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on community engagement in the out-of-school mentorship programme.

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD
The programme has a positive influence on how people in my community treat me.	3.2	4	8.9	46.7	37.2	4.107	0.947
The programme and my school work together to offer activities and services.	6.9	12	8	37.5	35.5	3.824	1.233
The programme has had a positive influence on how I treat people from my neighborhood.	2	2	8.3	45.3	42.4	4.241	0.842
The programme finds ways to involve my family.	6.3	6.9	8.3	40.7	37.8	3.968	1.141
I have opportunities to serve my community through the programme.	4.6	6.3	13.8	39.3	36.1	3.963	1.071

Source: Author's Survey Data, 2024.

4.2.3. Out-of-School Extracurricular Mentorship Activities

Participation varied widely across activity types (**Table 4**). Continuous PYD analysis accommodates these variations in exposure, which is crucial for understanding differential skill development. Results indicate varied participation across activity types. Religious and educational activities had the highest engagement: 70.5% of respondents participated in religious education programmes, 72.5% in book clubs or libraries, and 63% in remedial classes (tuition). Participation in sharing the gospel in the community was reported by 46% of youth, while 61.3% volunteered in community service-oriented activities. Music and choir participation stood at 38.4%, sports clubs at 49.3%, dance clubs at 32.4%, arts and crafts at 22.1%, and sewing or tailoring clubs at 9.5%. Technical skill-based clubs, such as agriculture and carpentry, had lower engagement, 18.9% and 7.2%, respectively, while cuisine/cooking classes and computer classes had moderate participation, 25.8% and 33.8%. Health-related classes engaged 48.7% of participants, and electronics repair clubs were rarely attended (9.5%) (**Table 4**).

Table 4. Participation in out-of-school extra curricula activities.

Activity	Yes, n (%)	No, n (%)
Sharing gospel in community	159 (46.0)	187 (54.0)
Religious education	246 (70.5)	98 (28.1)
Music/choir club	134 (38.4)	210 (60.2)
Sports club	172 (49.3)	171 (49.0)
Book club/library	253 (72.5)	91 (26.1)
Dance club	113 (32.4)	232 (66.5)
Arts and crafts club	77 (22.1)	265 (75.9)
Sewing or tailoring club	33 (9.5)	308 (88.3)
Agriculture club (skills, not paid work)	66 (18.9)	279 (79.9)
Educating peers about life skills	235 (67.3)	109 (31.2)

Continued

Carpentry club	25 (7.2)	316 (90.8)
Cuisine/cooking classes	90 (25.8)	252 (72.2)
English classes	185 (53.0)	158 (45.3)
Remedial classes (tuition)	220 (63.0)	125 (35.8)
Computer classes	118 (33.8)	225 (64.5)
Health classes	170 (48.7)	173 (49.6)
Electronics (repairing phones, etc.)	33 (9.5)	310 (88.8)
Volunteering to help community/neighbors	214 (61.3)	128 (36.7)
Community service	18 (5.2)	331 (94.8)

Source: Author's Survey Data, 2023.

Qualitative insights from FGDs corroborate these trends. Youth reported preference for activities that offered immediate benefits or incentives, including skill acquisition, social interaction, and tangible rewards such as free medical camps for HIV+ students, sanitary pads, and training tools. Arts, music, and sports were valued for personal enjoyment and socialization, while structured life skills activities were perceived as contributing to employability and problem-solving capacity. One participant remarked:

“When we close school we have to attend the Saturday programme. At the Programme we are involved in many activities such as sports, drama, catering, mobile repairs, dress making, shoe making and hair dressing. These activities have helped me build skills like collaboration, teamwork, and I also socialize with my peers.” (MG#4 FDG, 2004)

Participation patterns suggest uneven engagement across activity types, which is associated with differences in the breadth of skill development as reported by the participants. Low participation in vocational and technical skills clubs indicates potential barriers such as lack of interest, perceived relevance, or accessibility issues. The high participation in religious and educational programmes may reflect programme emphasis, cultural preferences, or both. These factors should be considered when designing comprehensive PYD interventions for out-of-school youth.

In summary, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data suggests that intentionally participating in active, structured, and ongoing mentorship programmes is associated with positive youth development outcomes, whereas general community engagement, though helpful, is not associated with the same degree of developmental outcomes. The findings illustrate that mentorship programmes offer essential social, educational, and emotional resources but that there are gaps in employability training, equitable participation, and the mentor-youth relationship suggesting opportunities for improving the programme to maximize youth development in informal settlements context.

4.3. Cross-Tabulation of Participation in Out-of-School Youth Mentorship and Positive Youth Development

Cross-tabulations are presented descriptively only, as PYD is treated as continuous for inferential analyses. High programme participation was descriptively associated with higher PYD scores, whereas community engagement alone showed weaker and less consistent associations. These patterns justify the focus on programme intensity in subsequent regression analysis (**Table 5**).

Table 5. Cross-tabulation of participation in out-of-school youth mentorship and positive youth development.

Factor	Level of Involvement	PYD Low (%)	PYD High (%)	χ^2	df	p-value
Programme Involvement	Low	67	33	30.478	2	0.001***
	Medium	7	93			
	High	3	97			
Community Engagement	Low	11	89	2.047	1	0.359
	Medium	7	94			
	High	4	96			

Source: Author's Survey Data, 2024; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

There was a strong association between the level of participation (intensity) in the mentorship programme and PYD ($\chi^2 = 30.478$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.001$). 97% of high intensity participants reported a high level of PYD, compared to 93% for the medium intensity group, and just 33% for the low intensity group. It may be expected that those who engaged more in the programme had more opportunities for structured learning experiences which addressed the themes of competence, confidence, character, and connection. Conversely, the association between intensity of community engagement (in a broad sense) with PYD did not present a statistically significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 2.047$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.359$). While 96% of high intensity community engagements reported the same high level of PYD, there appeared to be a less consistent relationship with community engagement overall than for mentorship participation. Overall, it appears that participation in structured mentorship programme settings is more closely associated with a higher level of PYD than engagement solely within the community. While community-based activities multiples engage and contribute to learning and social development, they seem to provide less sustained and/or less focused opportunities for developmental opportunities than structured mentorship programme experiences.

4.4. Multivariate Analysis of Participation in Out-of-School Youth Mentorship Activities and PYD

Using the descriptive and cross-tabulation analysis as a foundation, regression analysis was utilized to evaluate the predictive effect of programme involvement and community engagement on positive youth development (PYD) for youth

from Kibra Sub-County. As shown in **Table 6**, the regression model was statistically significant ($F(2346) = 40.305$, $p < 0.001$), which explained 18.9% of the variance in PYD ($R^2 = 0.189$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.184$). As hypothesized, programme involvement ($B = 0.277$, $\beta = 0.287$, $t = 5.565$, $p < 0.001$) and community engagement ($B = 0.153$, $\beta = 0.243$, $t = 4.72$, $p < 0.001$) both positively predicted PYD. These findings suggest a kind of hierarchy of effects, with structured and frequent participation in mentorship programmes producing direct positive youth outcomes, supplemented by community engagement (or community service, or family engagement) as secondary benefits. In practice, programme designers should emphasize programme intensity and structured mentoring opportunities for youth over community-based engagement (or family led engagement) as a main focus, while continuing to incorporate these as secondary options in programme coverage. Overall, the regression results confirmed and expanded upon descriptive and cross tabulation results, indicating that participation with intensity, and in a structured manner, is highly related to positive youth developmental outcomes in youth mentorship programs for youth out of school, while community engagement is valued but insufficient on its own to bring about continued progress in PYD.

Table 6. Regression analysis of programme involvement, community engagement, and positive youth development.

Model Summary	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.435	0.189	0.184	0.38		
Predictors:						
Model 1: Programme Involvement, Community Engagement						
ANOVA						
Model	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.657	2	5.828	40.305	0
	Residual	50.034	346	0.145		
	Total	61.691	348			
Coefficients						
Model	Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.432	0.192		12.7	0
	Programme Involvement	0.277	0.05	0.287	5.565	0
	Community Engagement	0.153	0.032	0.243	4.72	0

Source: Author's Survey Data, 2024; * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

From this study, the Key takeaways are that out-of-school youth mentorship programmes have a strong influence on Positive Youth Development (PYD) in Kibra Sub-County when youth are regularly, structured, and consistently actively

mentored—those who reported high levels of involvement in youth groups had a higher PYD level at 97%, compared to 33% of youth who were lowly involved in any of the programmes. The descriptive and regression analyses also indicated that programme participation was a stronger predictor of PYD compared to involvement in the general community—being involved in the community overall is helpful, but not enough on its own to sustain PYD. Most participation occurs during school break or holiday periods, and differences in mentoring care and attention, and mentorship, suggests levels of experiences were unequal; notably, the vocational and technical skills clubs were not well attended. In extracurricular activities, as commonly seen, there was a preference towards religious and education activities which hinted potential gaps in employable skill acquisition. The results presented in **Table 6** also confirm and expand upon the descriptive and cross-tabulation findings. The regression results ($R^2 = 0.189$) indicated that factors additionally influencing PYD are likely related to youths' family support of their wellbeing, access to socio-economic opportunities (poverty traps) in some respects, and connections to peers, along with the individual youth going through, suffering, and overcoming the threats—as the qualitative data supplements and supports some of these trends observed. Youth were consistently noting that their mentors were a trusted advisor who they could call upon as they engage life issues, help plan their goals, or learn to develop their own personal life and academic skills and experiences opportunities—as one participant stated:

“A mentor is someone you can trust and talk to. Mine also prays for me” (MR-FDG 1-1#8, PJ#00D).

Participants described engaging in joint activities such as sports, community cleanups, excursions, and church missions, which fostered social responsibility, teamwork, and confidence:

“At the project we have many activities like sports like football, table tennis, chess, we also are involved in community clean ups” (MR-#2FDG1-1, PJ#00F).

Participation in mentorship was associated with reported perceptions of safety and access to material support, including school fees and medical attention, which participants indicated helped them cope with socio-economic disadvantages as confirmed by the following:

“My Parents died of HIV when I was young. Since the project has taken care of my health and my medication. If it was not the project, where would I be?” (MG-#2FDG, PJ#00A)

Still, the findings suggest participation is sporadic; many youths only engage during their school breaks, vocational and technical skills clubs are not engaged in to any extent, and some mentoring and youth guidance are perceived as too rigid or inaccessible, causing a lack of trust and consistency in mentoring. *“My mentor is very strict, sometimes I feel she does not understand me. She does not expect me to fail in any subject. When I tell her that I don't understand math's, she is very strict. I don't like that”* (MR-#7FDG1-1, PJ#00E)

On the whole, quantitative findings show a strong association between engage-

ment in high-intensity, structured mentorship and Positive Youth Development (PYD), with programme involvement indicating a stronger association than overall community engagement (regression $\beta = 0.287$ vs 0.243 , $R^2 = 0.189$). Qualitative data provide contextual insight into these associations, with participants consistently reporting that trust in a mentor, access to resources, opportunities for skill-building activities, and social interaction were linked to higher perceptions of their own development. Some participation issues were noted, including involvement primarily during school holidays, low attendance in vocational and technical skills clubs, and perceptions of some mentorship as overly rigid or inconsistent, which participants indicated may be associated with lower perceived developmental benefits. Overall, these findings suggest that reported PYD outcomes are associated not only with the intensity of participation but also with the quality of mentor–youth relationships and the range of activities offered, and that gaps in participation and variety of activities may be associated with reduced effectiveness of mentorship programmes.

When considered within the frameworks of Positive Youth Development (PYD) and Rhodes' mentoring framework, the results reveal that structured out-of-school mentoring in Kibra can promote critical developmental assets—competence, confidence, connection, and character—but how these assets can be transformed into meaningful PYD outcomes, is contingent on quality of mentors, consistency, program structure, and contexts of support, such as family and peer networks. Participants described valuing relational support, shared experiences, skill development, and goal development; however, inconsistency in mentors' presence, authority, and underuse of vocational programming demonstrated that shortfalls in any one area can limit development overall. These findings are consistent with [24] and [25], who emphasize developmental, youth-centered mentoring and the satisfaction attained from being in a supportive relationship, whereas [27] warns that overly inflexible or authoritative stances could limit autonomy and contribute to negative experiences.

The research also reflects the difficulties in hybrid program models and context-sensitive implementation, in which having a hybrid or merged approach where formal and informal possibilities are combined can expand access but potentially dilute relational depth [22] [26]. Concentration of activities around school holidays, inconsistencies in mentor/researcher/how a mentor may respond, and over-reliance on parental or socio-economic status all imply that these PYD impacts broadly will remain uneven and incomplete in the absence of intentional measures taken to try and facilitate equal participation and consistency in continuity of role as agency. Taken together, all of these findings suggest that having a (same or other) mentor present time during the study will not achieve developmental gains in the youth's experience of promotion of PYD outcomes; sustained, high quality, adaptive and responsive program structure, and supportive social contexts are necessary, which point to the need for specific policy and program design that values training for mentors, programs that have regularity of contact points with

mentors, and access to opportunities to promote technical and life skills.

5. Conclusions

This research explored the link between participation in out-of-school youth mentorship programmes and positive youth development (PYD) in Kibra Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. This study aimed to explore how a structured mentorship experience can foster youth capabilities, agency, social engagement, and civic contributions to ultimately inform development strategies to nurture youthful populations economically and socially. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was utilized, gathering, in combination, quantitative survey data and qualitative focus group discussion and key informant interviews, to yield a holistic understanding of mentorship outcomes. Findings suggest that active involvement in mentorship programmes is associated with higher reported developmental outcomes. Students who reported greater engagement in their programme also reported higher levels of cognitive and academic competence, confidence, character, caring, and social connectedness, which reflect indicators of cognitive and ethical goal-setting, problem-solving, and empathy. Quantitative data analyses demonstrated the predictive ability of programme participation above and beyond community engagement, while qualitative emphasis related to the essential nature of mentors (including program staff, teachers, and grandparents) in shaping, supporting and modelling prosocial behaviors. Overall, the data demonstrate a very substantial contribution to the holistic development of secondary school-aged students at informal settlements through structured and sustained mentorship.

The investigation makes multiple distinctive contributions. It provides an empirical examination of the relationship between the degree of engagement with a specific program and measurable PYD effects around the relational aspect of mentorship. It illustrates that mentorship is associated with not just youth development at an individual level, but also contributions for youth to their school and community, which socially demonstrates a greater societal value to programming outside-school support. In addition, evidence shows that the enabling environment, such as institutionalized support and social expectations, mediates the effect of mentorship, showing great implications on the need for contextual consideration in program design and implementation.

In terms of theoretical and managerial aspects of the research, the study supports the Positive Youth Development framework and extends it by highlighting relational processes and contributions that depend on context. From a practical perspective, program managers should seek structured engagement, structured mentor training that is focused on the youth's influence and "voice", and build mechanisms to promote youth agency and youth in leadership. Additionally, supportive policy frameworks could better enable inclusive mentorship, and youth contributions could be better recognized, or considered and implemented right alongside mentorship into a larger policy and "school-community" development agenda.

The research has some limitations. The study's cross-sectional convergent parallel design limits causal inference validity and cannot take into account long-term impacts, which are of importance in mentorship studies. Two aspects of participant selection are likely to limit generalizability—participants were selected from a programme, and then from the networks of local churches. The use of self-reported measures also could be at risk for social desirability bias, even though triangulating with qualitative data, confirming records of attendance and participation and conducting a rigorous piloting study helped to mitigate that risk. Future research would benefit from longitudinal studies to investigate lasting impacts on mental health, leadership, and civic engagement. Comparative studies conducted in a number of different cultural and socio-economic contexts could test the transferability and effectiveness of mentorship models. Future studies may also consider using emerging technology in the form of digital mentorship, AI, and virtual engagement as possible points of innovation for increasing accessibility and personalization. Qualitative methodologies like ethnography and narrative analysis are suggested to investigate the lived experiences of youth mentorship, as these methods will offer rich context that numbers quantify but do not capture on their own.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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