

# Social Competence As A Correlate Of School Adjustment Among Form One Students In Murang'a County, Kenya

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*Abstract: Most students face a lot of difficulties in adjusting to their new school environment when they join secondary schools. This has been reported among form one students in Murang'a County. As more students struggle to fit in and cope with school adjustment challenges, the issue has grown to be a major source of concern. It has resulted in major problems for certain students who have developed a negative attitude and behavior toward the school, making it difficult for them to engage in studying. Little effort has been made to investigate the factors that contribute to students' poor adjustment to new school environment. The purpose of the study therefore was to investigate social competence as a correlate of school adjustment amongst form one students. The study adopted correlational research design to establish the relationship between social competence and school adjustment. The target population of this study included all 6043 form one students in the county. The study sampled 362 students from 12 out of 51 secondary schools. Purposive sampling was used to choose Murang'a South Sub-County. The 12 secondary schools were sampled using a stratified sampling procedure. To confirm the validity and reliability of the research instruments, piloting was carried out in one school with a sample of 20 (10 boys and 10 girls). The quantitative data collected were analyzed using SPSS. Social competence among students and school adjustment showed a positive and significant correlation with school adjustment,  $r(347) = .39$ ,  $p < .05$ . A statistically significant difference in adjustment between boys and girls was also found by the independent t-test,  $t(347) = 3.26$ ,  $p < .05$ . This suggests that form one boys and girls' levels of school adjustment differ significantly in favour of boys. The findings imply that boys adjusted more successfully than girls. The study recommends that in order to strengthen and guarantee students' school adjustment, instructors and all other school stakeholders should increase students' social competence.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

School adjustment is a matter of concern to many stakeholders in the education field including teachers, parents, the ministry of education as well as the school administration. Promoting students' adjustment to the school is not only important for academic outcomes but also for their psychological, emotional and relational well-being (Longobardi et al. 2016). According to Zorbar and Ergene (2019), children who adjust to their school are more likely to succeed in the future and are less likely to face drop out risks

as compared to students with school adjustment problems who are more prone to greater difficulty in their academic and social relationships in later educational stages. School adjustment, although being a major concern at all stages of development, is especially critical at adolescence where the ability to express and understand emotions, assign meaning to emotional experiences and to regulate feelings that are helpful for psychological and social well being takes these adolescents to task. As in every new situation, children who encounter a new school environment for the first time go through an adjustment process (Zorbar&Ergene, 2019). Moving to

unfamiliar and quite often stressful school environment may result to maladjustment causing unnecessary absenteeism and eventually dropping out of school. Failure to adjust may lead to a decline in a student's motivation, absenteeism, a decline in academic achievement, drug abuse and this consequently may cause them to drop out of school. This is also echoed by Virtanen et al. (2019) who asserts that school adjustment poses educational and psychological challenges including, loss in student engagement, decline in students' psychological well-being, weakened self-esteem, among others. Positive school adjustment on the other hand, may lead to school adjustment thus retention, academic success as well as general well-being of students. School adjustment has been related to many aspects such as school adaptation, satisfaction, engagement and academic achievement among others.

Students' school adjustment can highly be influenced by the interaction between the individual and their environment as they strive to maintain a balance between their academic, social and emotional needs with the school environment. This may be qualified by the ability of the learner to strike a balance between their competence, available social support as academic demands increase and new social relations established and students may feel incapable of dealing with these demands affecting their academic, behavioural and emotional adjustment and eventually may lead to poor school adjustment. According to Longobardi et al. (2019), school transition requires students to adapt to new challenges and situations. They advance that teacher-student relationship may act as a protective factor for the risk of developing psychological problems during the transition. They highlight the fact that a good quality relationship between teachers and students promotes a positive environment, a higher sense of belonging as well as a sense of exchange and cooperation.

Throughout their life in school, students are continuously confronted with various adjustment concerns that could eventually affect their well being and adjustment. Given these concerns, factors such as social support may buffer adolescents from these outcomes and need to be prioritised as a potential intervention for the students. Students depend on teachers, peers, close friends and classmates and other significant figures in the school environment. A student who feels cared for is able to actively engage in the learning environment hence, the quality of early teacher-student relationship can have a strong influence on the learner's overall adjustment. A study by Páramo et al. (2014) in a sample of 300 first year university students in Spain reveals that adjustment to college can be either stressful or supportive depending on perceived social support. The study revealed that perceived social support was a good predictor of adjustment to university and especially support from peers.

Locally, research on students' school adjustment reveals that learners face varied challenges as they transition to new school environments. Wang'eri et al. (2012) in their study among first year students at Kenyatta University in Kenya on transitional challenges faced by students confirm this reality. In as much as students enjoy admission to university, they also experience deep anxieties as they break and move away from home and from familiar people for the first time and adjusting to an all together unfamiliar environment. This can prove to be a stressful social and psychological experience. When these

students are not provided with the necessary support during this transition period, they may develop signs of declined emotional well-being, which may be manifested in problematic behavioural patterns in many cases.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For many years, students' transition from primary to secondary schools has been seen as a significant milestone in their lives. This is due to the changes that occur in the social context and school setting, which have both positive and negative implications in the lives of learners. Adjusting to this new environment can be a difficult and stressful task. As students progress to secondary school, their initial interaction and social support from friends and family diminishes. When combined with the difficulty of managing the pressure associated with this shift, increased psychological distress can lead to poor school adjustment, which can lead to low motivation, absenteeism, and participating in delinquent behavior, among other things. For example, prior research by Uka(2020) has emphasized the concerns that students have when transferring to a larger school and how rapid changes in location, size, and personal function within a large organization may harm their identities as learners.

Students transitioning from primary to secondary school in Kenya have the same difficulties in adjusting to new situations. They confront difficulties in achieving a balanced state of their own demands and how these requirements are met in the school setting. In order to achieve desirable attitudes, excellent relationships, and appropriate self-understanding that would aid students' adjustment to the new environment, both psychological and social variables are crucial in every social context, including school. People who develop strong relationships display lower levels of problem behavior, high levels of self-esteem, a positive self-concept, leadership qualities, and prosocial behaviors. They may receive a lot of help in adjusting to school from their peers and close friends who attend the same school. The demands of adjusting to the academic system, daily tasks, and developing a new range of social relationships with classmates, teachers, and other significant members of the school community may be quite overwhelming for many of these students, who are sadly underprepared for the realities of secondary school. As a result, many students can experience severe social and psychological imbalances that could have an impact on how they interact with others and, ultimately, how well they accomplish their life goals. Students who lack the psychosocial support they require and the social abilities to relate to others may become aggressive and experience poor adjustment, which causes them to repeatedly display behavioral patterns linked to low levels of adjustment, including low self-competence and reluctance to participate in extracurricular activities, among others, and may eventually drop out of school. In light of these circumstances, the research set out to determine social competence as correlates of school adjustment amongst form one students in Murang'a County, Kenya.

### III. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to investigate social competence as a correlate of school adjustment among form one students in Muranga County, Kenya.

### IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Social skills are crucial to a learner's school adjustment. Our everyday lives depend on interactions with others and almost all the activities and experiences students face depend on building relations with others. Students are mainly concerned about social relationships. Students who are able to make friends and deal with changes are best able to cope and manage a relatively successful transition, as friends help the student to adjust to the new school setting. In addition to peers, perceived support from teachers and other stakeholders in the school has a major impact on how students adapt in the new school context (Strand, 2019). The day to day interactions with teachers are critically important in facilitating the learner's continued engagement with school as they transit to secondary school. School climate is closely linked to the interpersonal relations between students and teachers and with other peers. This enhances social competence skills of learners as they feel accepted, respected and accommodated in the school environment.

Previous studies show that the quality of a student's social competence determines their success in school. Social competence thus may be demonstrated by the quality of interaction between the person and their social environment. Social competencies are essentially relational and they demonstrate the behaviour of individuals in the context of interpersonal and group interactions. Peers are an important source of social skills development as peer interaction promotes students' social perspective (McLeod, 2013). To support the development of social skills of the learner, the classroom environment should also centre on respecting students' feelings. Sympathy and empathy should be shown to students who do not feel to participate in some activities. The current study suggested that students' social skill are important and should be encouraged at all times. Through other means including psychosocial support from both peers and teachers, students will experience a sense of connectedness and belonging to the larger group and therefore development self-worth and ability to relate with others. This provides a safe platform for them to develop social skills.

Evidence gathered in high-income countries (HICs) shows that students' attachment and adjustment to school is strongly influenced by the learning environment. Ensuring a safer learning, more caring, participatory and better managed school environment enhances students' social competence and have demonstrated students' attachment and adjustment to school (INEE, 2016). This is echoed in a research conducted by Awang et al. (2014). The research besides exploring first year students' experience in receiving social support and how this related to their ability to adapt with the University ethos, also considered how the social support contributed to their academic adjustment. It was a qualitative research that used individual semi-structured questionnaires administered to 16

university students in Malaysia. The study revealed that academic adjustment, social adjustment and emotional adjustment among new students are dependent on their abilities in receiving socio-educational support from friends in terms of supportive friendships, and families. Results also revealed the powerful influence of parents and the importance of social relationships for students' well being. The findings of the study also indicate the importance of school community, senior students and family-network in adapting to a new environment. The current study focused more on the the situation of students and their transition to secondary school in Kenya. The current study compared the results of the two settings and also the educational level of the students to find if the results would be similar.

Lee (2020) carried out research in China. With a sample comprising of 261 Chinese children (138 boys, 123 girls). The aim of the research was to examine how social competence moderates relations between intelligence and measures of school adjustment. Data were collected from multiple sources. Children's IQ was assessed using the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence. In a followup study when the participants were in the fourth grade, peer assessments were done to assess their social competence. They were also required to report their self-perceptions of academic performance. In addition, peer nominations and teacher ratings were used to assess school competence, learning problems and peer preferences. The results from the study revealed that IQ was positively associated with all measures of school adjustment more strongly in individuals with low social competence than in individuals with high social competence. This demonstrates the protective role that social competence can play in the development of school problems among children who are relatively lower in intelligence. These findings were found to have implications for researchers, teachers and parents on promoting social skills among children for success in school. While the research was done among preschool children and later done when they were in the fourth grade, the current study was carried out among form one students in Murang'a South sub-county, Kenya to establish whether the findings corroborate.

Syiem and Nongrum (2014) conducted a study on social competence of secondary school students of Shillong, India. The sample comprised of 83 students randomly sampled from five schools of Shillong town. The results revealed that there was no significant relationship between social competence and academic achievement. The current study used a larger sample for more representation of secondary school students in Kenya and specifically in Murang'a South sub-county in Murang'a County. The current study also looked at the relationship between students' social competence and school adjustment.

Vimple and Sawhney (2017) carried out another study to establish the link between social competence and home environment for teenagers. The sample comprised of 800 students taken randomly from schools in India. The results showed that personal adequacy dimension of social competence has positive, low but significant relation with academic stimulation dimension of home environment. The results also revealed that there exists positive, very low but significant correlation between interpersonal adequacy dimension of social competence, parental involvement and

academic stimulation. There also exists a positive, but low significant correlation between social competence and home environment of adolescents. While this study focused on social competence and home environment for teenagers, the current study focused on secondary school students' social competence in the school setting and how this impacted on their overall adjustment to the school environment.

Sarūnė et al. (2018) conducted a study among elementary school children in Lithuania, which aimed at examining teacher perceptions of social competence and students' school adjustment. The sample consisted of 403 elementary school children aged 7 or 8 years. The study considered academic achievement, student-teacher relationships, and school anxiety as the indicators for school adjustment. The findings revealed that both interpersonal and learning-related factors of social competence significantly correlated with school adjustment. While this study was carried out among elementary school children, the current study was done among secondary school students and endeavoured to establish whether similar conclusions would be arrived at with regard to school adjustment in the two set of groups.

A study by Mudhovozi (2012) among first year students in a university in Zimbabwe was done to investigate their social and academic experiences which used phenomenological research design. The population comprised of 7 respondents among them 3 males and 4 females with age ranging between 18 and 36 years. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each respondent. The respondents reported that they experienced varied social and academic adjustment problems. The students over-relied on social networks to cope with the challenges. The research suggested the need for students to be exposed to various coping resources to enable them to quickly and smoothly adjust to the new life at university. The current study focused on secondary school students in Kenya. It investigated on the relationship among perceived psychosocial support, social competence and psychological well-being and how these enhanced the smooth adjustment of form one students to the school. The current research used correlational design as well as a larger sample compared to the one carried out in Zimbabwe to compare results.

Kyalo and Chumba (2011) did a research in Egerton University, Njoro Campus, Kenya investigating the influence of some selected factors on students' social and academic adjustment. The study adopted ex post facto causal-comparative research design. The study was done with a sample of 357 students, and three staff from the Dean of students' office. Data was collected using closed and open-ended University Students' Questionnaire (USQ). The findings showed that interpersonal relationships and students' attitude towards the overall university environment as well as the academic program were strong factors that influenced academic adjustment of the students. The findings however also revealed that first year students had a higher level of adjustment compared to other students in the university. These findings contradict the assumption of this study that new students would have more challenges in adjustment as they struggle to fit into a new environment for the first time away from the familiar home environment and the people they are used to. The study recommended the need for the university to

encourage social activities that can facilitate effective interpersonal relationships among students. It is the attempt of the current study to establish the extent to which the necessary social competencies can contribute to the level of adjustment of the learners. While their research was carried out among university students, the current study was carried out among form one students in Murang'a South Sub-county.

The reviewed literature looks at social competence as an ingredient for adjustment but limited to the experiences from peers. While this is paramount, social competence also develops through the support learners receive from their teachers and when provided within a conducive overall environment. Some studies revealed that there was no significant relationship between social competence and school adjustment. The current study intended to use the same variable to establish whether the results would be the same using a different population in a different context. When learners are in an enhancing social environment they in turn develop social skills, which aid in positive social interactions enhancing their social adjustment and consequently school achievement.

## V. METHODOLOGY

### A. RESEARCH DESIGN AND TARGET POPULATION

A correlational research design was adopted in this study. In this design, the direction and intensity of the association are assessed by examining the covariation or degree of interaction between two or more variables (Whitley & Kite, 2013). The design was chosen for the current study because it allowed the researcher to evaluate the association between social competence and school adjustment among Form one students in Murang'a South Sub-county. The design also helps in determining the strength and direction of association of the predicted relationship. It is considered a good study approach to use when the researcher wants to analyze how the independent variables affect the dependent variable but is unable to randomize and control the independent variables. The study targeted 51 secondary schools in Murang'a South Sub-County, with a target enrollment of 6,043 form one students. The decision was made to focus on form one students since they were had just transitioned from primary to secondary education, from a familiar to a new setting and would experience adjustment challenges at school (Wang'eri et al. 2012).

### B. SAMPLING TECHNIQUES AND SAMPLE SIZE

The study used stratified sampling to select 12 out of 51 secondary schools in the county. The schools were divided into coeducational, girls' boarding, and boys' boarding schools. Because it guaranteed that the participants would be representative of the four categories of schools, stratified sampling was deemed appropriate. Then, four schools were purposefully chosen from each stratum. The required number of volunteers from each school were then chosen at random by the researcher. Classes from Form 1 were carefully chosen. 6,043 Form One students, the study's sample size, were

chosen. To guarantee that students from each school were represented in the sample size of students for this study in the same proportion as the number of students in the school, probability proportional to size (PPS) approach was utilized. The fact that the strata varied in size made it possible for the sample sizes to stay appropriate to the size of the strata. As one of the counties tracking the incidence of adjustment issues among students, Murang'a County was purposefully sampled. Only 12 of the sub-county's 51 secondary schools were included in this research's sample. A random sample of 362 pupils from the 12 schools was used. This sample was calculated using the study population and sample size information provided in the table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Additionally, the sample size calculation was made easier by using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula.

### C. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

#### a. SOCIAL COMPETENCE-TEEN SURVEY (SCTS)

The scale was developed by Child Trends for the Flourishing Children Project (2012). It was used in this research to measure the social competence level of students. It consists of nine statements rated on a scale from 1 to 5. The first three statements aim at investigating how well they describe the students depending on which statement applies to them, where 1 = *not at all like me*, 2 = *a little like me*, 3 = *somewhat like me*, 4 = *a lot like me* and 5 = *highly satisfactory*. Then follows six statements that indicate how often the given scenario happens, where 1 = *none of the time*, 2 = *a little of the time*, 3 = *some of the time*, 4 = *most of the time*, 5 = *all of the time* (Appendix C). Participants who were categorized as low had a score ranging between 9 – 20 while those categorized as moderate had a score ranging between 21 – 32. Participants who scored high had scores ranging between 34 – 45. These scores can be interpreted thus; participants who had 9 – 20 demonstrated that they have a low level of social competence, while those who indicated had 21 – 32 showed a moderate level of social competence and those who categorized as high 33 – 45 showed a high level of social competence.

#### b. SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT-CHILD (REVISED) SCALE (SACS)

This scale was developed by Maumary-Gremaud in 2000. It has seventeen-items that were used to assess how well kids thought they had adapted to school. The school adjustment was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting never, 2 denoting never true, 3 denoting sometimes true, 4 denoting usually true, and 5 denoting always true. The lowest score that could be achieved was 5, the average was roughly 28, and the maximum was 85. Respondents who chose option 5 showed a low level of adjustment, while those who chose option 28 showed a negligible level of school adjustment, and those who chose option 85 showed a high level of adjustment.

#### c. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES, ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The researcher obtained a research authorization letter from Kenyatta University Graduate School and then proceeded to the National Council of Science and Technology (NACOSTI) to procure a research permit to conduct research in Murang'a County. The researcher also got a research permit from the Ministry of Education at both the County and the Sub-County to be allowed to conduct research in the locale. The sampled secondary schools were also visited prior to the study for introduction and familiarization with the principals. The researcher informed them about the study and obtained permission from them. This enabled the researcher to organise the appropriate day and time when to meet with the participants from each school for the actual data collection. Following the schedule for the booked days and time, the researcher finally visited the twelve sampled secondary schools to collect data. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher took time to explain the aim and objectives of the study to the participants and obtained an informed consent from them.

Before the analysis, the data were also cleaned to look for any outliers and missing data. Data analysis involved the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics. In order to analyze the quantitative data, they were coded and entered into SPSS computer program. For descriptive data, frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency were employed. Tables, means, and percentages were used for presentation, while skewness and kurtosis were used to define the distribution's forms. The correlations between the variables were tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation.

## VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section presents the participants' demographic information on age, gender and the type of school. A cross-tabulation of participants' age and gender was done and the results were recorded in Table 1.

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Age	12-15	53	169	222
	16-19	76	50	126
	20-23	1	0	1
Total		130	219	349

Table 1: Cross-tabulation of Participants' Age and Gender

From Table 1, the respondents aged 12-15 were represented by 53 male and 169 female students while those aged 16-19 had 76 males and 50 females. The respondents of age 20-23 had 1 male and 0 female students.

### B. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS' SOCIAL COMPETENCE

The social competence scores of the students were categorized into low, moderate and high levels of social competence. Those categorized as low had a score of between

9 and 21, followed by those at moderate level ranging between 22 and 33 and finally those who scored highly on social competence had a score between 34 and 45. The results are tabulated in Table 2.

Level	Frequency	%
LSC	26	7.4
MSC	151	43.3
HSC	172	49.3
Total	349	100.0

Note. N = 349; LSC = Low Social Competence; MSC = Moderate Social Competence; HSC = High Social Competence.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of the Levels of participants' Social Competence

The results in Table 2 indicate that majority of the participants reported high and moderate levels of social competence represented by 43.3% and 49.3% respectively. Only 7.4% of the participants reported a low level of social competence. This implies that most of the respondents perceived themselves as having good social competence skills.

Social competence had two domains namely positive relationships and prosocial behaviour. The descriptive analysis for the domains of social competence were also obtained and the results were presented in Table 3.

Domains of Social Competence	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Sk	Kur
Positive relationships	349	4	11	7.97	1.79	-.55	-.57
Prosocial behaviour	349	3	9	6.32	1.46	-.49	-.60

Note. N = 349; Min = Minimum; Max = Maximum; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Sk = Skewness; Kur = Kurtosis

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of the Domains of Social Competence

The results in Table 3 indicate that the minimum and maximum scores for positive relationships were 4 and 11 respectively while those of prosocial behaviour were 3 and 9. Positive relationships had a higher mean of 7.97 (SD = 1.79) than prosocial behaviour 6.32 (SD = 1.46). The coefficient skewness of the two domains was negative indicating that the participants rated themselves highly on these domains with positive relationship domain recording a higher skewness coefficient -.55 followed by prosocial behaviour with a skewness coefficient of -.49.

The students' scores in social competence scale were further analyzed in terms of age and gender. The scores were described as given in Table 4.

Demographic characteristic	Levels of Social Competence		
	Low	Moderate	High
Age			
Total/%			
13 – 15 63.6	7.4	26.9	29.2
16 – 18 35.8	0.0	16.3	19.5
19 – 21 0.6	0.0	0.0	0.6
Gender			
Male 37.2	2.9	11.7	22.6

Female	4.6	32.5	26.6
62.8			

Note. N = 349

Table 4: Descriptives Statistics of Social Competence Levels by Age and Gender

The results in Table 4 indicate that among the participants aged between 13 to 15 years, only 7.4% attested to low levels of social competence followed by another 26.9% who expressed a moderate level of social competence and finally 29.2% who demonstrated a high level of social competence. This indicates that majority of the participants rated themselves as moderate and high in terms of social competence. In the category of participants aged 16 to 18, none showed a low level of social competence while 16.3% demonstrated a moderate level of and 19.5% reported a high level of social competence. In the last category of participants aged between 19 to 21 years, no participant indicated a low or moderate level of social competence. In this category in addition, only 0.6% of the participants reported a high level of social competence. These results further indicate that majority of the participants are in the age bracket of 13 – 15 years. Those aged between 19 – 21 are a minority represented by 0.2%. The results also indicate that majority of the students had adequate social skills as indicated by 29.2% in the category of 13 – 15 and 19.5% aged 16 – 18.

With regard to gender, only 2.9% of the male participants showed a low level of social support while 11.7% showed a moderate level of social competence while the majority of the male participants 22.6% showed a high level of social competence. Among the female participants, 4.6% showed a low level of social competence followed by 31.5% who demonstrated a moderate level of social competence and another 26.6% who attested to having a high level of social competence.

These results indicate that while the majority of the male participants demonstrated a high level of social competence, majority of the female participants on the other hand showed a moderate level. This implies that boys are more socially competent than their female counterparts. This means that female students might need more support to equip them with the necessary social skills while at school.

### C. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

To ascertain whether there were any variations in school adjustment among the students, the researcher needed to determine the level of adjustment of the pupils. Data gathered was used to divide the students into three groups based on whether they had low, moderate, or high levels of school adjustment. The school adjustment-child scale (SACS) (revised), created by Maumary-Gremaud (2000), was used to assess how well students were adjusting to school. The scale is rated on a 5 – point likert scale where 1 = never true, 2 = seldom true, 3 = sometimes true, 4 = usually true and 5 = always true. Participants between the ages of 29 and 40 were classified as having a low level of school adjustment, those between the ages of 41 and 59 as having a moderate level of school adjustment, and those between the ages of 60 and 71 as having a high level of school adjustment. To determine the

frequency and percentage, the level of school adjustment scores of the participants were assessed. Table 5 presents the outcomes.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
LSA	66	18.9
MSA	256	72.2
HAS	31	8.9
Total	349	100

Note:  $N = 349$ ; LSA = Low School Adjustment; MSA = Moderate School Adjustment; HSA = High School Adjustment.

Table 5: Descriptives of Frequency of School Adjustment

The results in Table 5 indicate that 18.9% of the participants had a low school adjustment while 72.2% had a moderate school adjustment. Another 8.9% indicated a high school adjustment level. This means that majority of the participants were moderately adjusted in school. This might indicate that majority of the participants were average in school adjustment.

The descriptive statistics of school adjustment were further analyzed based on age and gender of the participants to determine whether there was any difference between boys and girls in school adjustment. The results are shown in Table 6.

Demographic characteristic	Levels of School Adjustment		
	Low	Medium	High
Age			
12 – 15 63.6	7.2	51.3	5.2
16 – 19 35.8	11.5	20.6	3.7
20 – 23 0.6	0.3	0.3	0.0
Gender			
Male 37.2	11.2	18.6	7.4
Female 62.8)	7.7	53.6	1.4

Note.  $N = 349$ ; All values represent percentages.

Table 6: Descriptives of School Adjustment by Age and Gender

Table 6 indicated the descriptive results of school adjustment by age and gender. The results indicated in the age category of 12-15 showed different levels of adjustment. Those with low adjustment represented 7.20%, medium were 51.30% and high adjustment were 5.20%. The students in the age category of 16-19 showed low adjust of 11.5%, medium of 20.6% and high adjustment 3.7%. In the same note, the students in the age category of 20-23 showed a low level of adjustment at 0.3%, medium adjustment at 0=3% and high level of adjustment at 0.0%. The study also categorized the level of adjustment amongst students based on gender. The male students represented 37.2% of the students while female students were 62.8%. The male students showed low adjustment of 11.2%, medium adjustment of 18.6% and High adjustment of 7.4%. The results reveals that majority of male

students showed a medium adjustment. Female students showed low adjustment of 7.7%, medium adjustment of 53.6% and high adjustment of 1.4%. This inferred that majority of female students adjusted to a moderate level.

#### D. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The second objective of this study sought to establish whether there was any relationship between social competence and school adjustment. Following this objective, the following null hypothesis was tested.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant relationship between social competence and school adjustment among form one students in Murang'a South Sub-county.

To test the hypothesis, data were subjected to a bivariate correlational analysis using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, and the results are presented in Table 7.

	School Adjustment	
Students' Social Competence	Pearson Correlation	.39**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00

Note.  $N = 349$ .

Table 7: Correlation between Students' Social Competence and School Adjustment

The results on Table 7 indicate a statistically moderate positive significant relationship between students' social competence and school adjustment,  $r(349) = .39, p < .05$ . Based on these results the null hypothesis was therefore rejected and the alternative one adopted. Having found a positive significant relationship between social competence and school adjustment, this led to the conclusion that students' social competence was significantly related to their school adjustment. This meant that students who demonstrate competency in social skills are also able to adjust appropriately in school.

Based on these findings, the researcher conducted a further analysis to establish whether the two domains of social competence were significantly related with school adjustment. The two domains were also subjected to a bivariate correlation analysis using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The results are presented in Table 8.

	School Adjustment	
Positive relationships	Pearson Correlation	.40**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00
Prosocial behavior	Pearson Correlation	.38**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00

Note.  $N = 349$

\*\* Correlation is significant at  $P \leq .01$  level (2-tailed).

Table 8: Correlation between Domains of Social Competence and School Adjustment

The results in Table 8 indicate that the two domains of social competence had a correlation with school adjustment. Positive relationships had a higher significant positive correlation with school adjustment  $r(349) = .40, p < .05$

compared to prosocial behavior  $r(349) = .38, p < .05$ . This meant that students with positive relationships and prosocial behaviors adjusted appropriately to the school environment.

## E. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The second objective of this study was to establish the relationship between students' social competence and school adjustment. A positive and significant relationship between social competence and school adjustment was found as shown in Table 4.25. This implies that students who are competent in social skills exhibit appropriate school adjustment. In order to successfully interact with others and cope with the complexities, stress and expectations in a learning environment, it is inherent that all students should possess adequate social competencies, which will facilitate them to adjust to the school with ease. Erickson's psychosocial development theory that informed this study suggests that human beings want to belong and fit in well to new environment. The students involved in this study were in the fifth stage of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, identity vs role confusion developmental stage. When they transit from primary to secondary schools, they endeavor to fit into the new environment. The social skills of the students influence their adjustment hence, they are crucial to their adjustment. Adequate social skills lead to positive adjustment while inadequate social skills lead to maladjustment. The results of a significant and positive relationship between social competence and school adjustment in this study agree with this theory.

The results of the current research support the findings of similar studies. Lee (2020) carried out a study among Chinese students and found a positive relationship between social competence and learners' school adjustment. These results are in line with those of the current study that social competence influenced school adjustment amongst school-going children. The results indicated that children with low social competence and intelligence experienced challenges in adjusting to the school environment. This implies that social competence is an important aspect in school adjustment among students. Thus, efforts to enhance social competence of the students promote appropriate school adjustment among secondary school students particularly among form one students.

The findings from another study by Magelinskaitė-Legkauskienė et al. (2018) on social competence and learners' school adjustment also support the findings of the current study. Their results also indicated a positive relationship between learners' social competence and their ability to adjust to school. They further discussed that the domains of social competence including interpersonal and curriculum-related activities amongst the first and second-grade students were significantly related to the school adjustment. Additionally, they found out that the two aspects of social competence had an influence on academic achievement. The results suggest that students with adequate social competence skills do not experience school adjustment challenges. The school adjustment challenges experienced in the locale of the current study may be attributed to inadequate social competence skills among the students. This implies that the various stakeholders that make the school community must recognise that the

success of the students depends on the richness of the social competencies possessed from their interactions with the school environment and which are important for a successful social adaptation that enhances students' school adjustment.

Similar findings are found by Perolli (2019) in his study to determine the relationship between academic achievement and social competence, and attitude towards school who reports a positive correlation between social competence and academic achievement. Although the current study looks at social competence and school adjustment, Perolli's (2019) results for academic achievement could be attributed to the learners' ability to be adequately adjusted to school hence able to deal with the academic demands with ease. The findings of the study indicated that involvement of the parents and peer relations were significant predictors of learners' social competence and attitudes towards school. These findings corroborate the findings of the current study and suggest that key stakeholders have a great role to play in ensuring that students acquire the necessary social skills. The parents and the peers have a key role to play in the development of social competence to enhance school adjustment of form one students.

Similar findings are reported by Legkauskas et al. (2015) in their study to investigate the relationship between school adjustment and social competence. Their findings show a positive relationship between the variables. The study found out that students with good social competence were able to build good social relationships in their new environment, enabling them to adjust faster because of reduced stress and loneliness. Such students also posted better academic performance compared to those with lower social competence. These findings agree with those of the current study which also indicate that students who have good social skills also adjust with ease to the school. Hence, social competence impacts greatly to students' adjustment. The study recommended that more effort should be made to build social competence amongst transitioning students to help them adjust to the new school environment and in turn boost their academic performance.

Results from a study by Vimple and Sawhney (2017) that sought to establish the link between social competence and home environment for teenagers also have findings that are in line with the current study that indeed there was a positive significant link (but low) between social competence and home environment for teenagers. This implies that a conducive home environment associated with factors like parental love and care may contribute greatly to higher academic achievement. Although these findings are based on home environment, the current study considers the school environment. The two environments show no conflict but both agree that social competence is key in students' process of adjustment.

Mudhovozi (2012), in his study among first-year students in a university in Zimbabwe investigating the social and academic experiences of first-year students came up with similar results. The findings of this study indicated varied social and academic adjustment problems amongst the students. Their main source of the problems was the social networks and valuable beliefs to manage these problems. This implies that the peers had an influence on social adjustment

amongst the students, which is congruent to our findings. Students with high degree of social competence skills exhibit less school adjustment problems compared to students with low social competence skills. The current study suggests the central role of all the stakeholders to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary social skills, which will facilitate their process of adjustment and eventually their academic achievement.

Contradicting results are reported by Syiem and Nongrum (2014) in their study on social competence of secondary school students in Shillong which found out that there was no significant relationship between social competence and academic achievement and school adjustment. The results may be attributed to the fact that success in school adjustment and academic achievement require skills that differ significantly.

In Kenya, Kyalo and Chumba (2011) came up with contradicting findings from their study among undergraduate students of Egerton University, Kenya. The study investigated the influence of some selected factors on students' social and academic adjustment. The study involved selected social competence factors, and how they influenced academic adjustment amongst the students. The findings by Kyalo and Chumba (2011) revealed that first-year students had a higher level of adjustment compared to other students in the university. These results disagree with those of the current study which found out that form one students experienced various challenges in the process of transitting to secondary school. The results by Kyalo and Chumba (2011) could imply that students' adjustment was associated with social skills. The results suggest that social competence enhances school adjustment among the students. While it is true that social competence is a key element for school adjustment, deliberate efforts must be made to equip students with those skills. These might include; assigning group activities, team work, peer teaching, giving room for students to express themselves, among others.

Based on the above discussion, it is worth noting that, despite the mixed findings, a significant positive relationship was found between students' social competence and school adjustment. This means that despite the cultural context, background and levels the learners require a certain level of social competence in order to adjust adequately to the school environment. Consequently, it is necessary to empower learners with the necessary social skills in order to enhance their school adjustment. A learner who is socially competent can adjust easily to the school. On the contrary, a learner is poor in social competence will have more challenges in adjusting to the school.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the study was to establish the relationship between students' social competence and school adjustment. The results revealed that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between students' social competence and school adjustment. When the sub-domains of social competence were tested, the results indicated a positive relationship of the two domains and school adjustment. The

descriptive statistics revealed that the students performed better in positive relationships than in prosocial behavior. Majority of the students had high and moderate levels of social competence represented by 31.90 ( $SD = 7.14$ ). This implied that most of the participants perceived themselves as having good social skills. When the researcher tested whether there was any difference in social competence and gender, it was found that female respondents performed slightly better 93 (26.6%) in social skills than male participants 79 (22.6%).

On the relationship between social competence and school adjustment, the researcher hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between social competence and school adjustment among form one students in Murang'a South Sub-county. The hypothesis was subjected to a bivariate correlational analysis and the results showed that there was a statistically positive significant relationship between students' social competence and school adjustment. It was also established that the domains of social competence (positive relationships and prosocial behavior) had a positive and significant relationship with school adjustment.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The second objective of the study sought to establish the relationship between students' social competence and school adjustment. From the findings, it was revealed that there was a positive significant relationship between student's social competence and school adjustment. Students who reported higher scores in social competence also showed better school adjustment. It was therefore recommended that the school administration endeavor to have programmes that would help form one students develop social skills in order to enhance their school adjustment.

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