

**SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE
INFLUENCE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES ON
THEIR SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN KEIYO NORTH SUB COUNTY,
KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Students in secondary schools have to adjust to the school environment, relationships and demands of life. Therefore, guidance and counselling offer an opportunity through which the above-mentioned adjustment can occur. This paper investigates secondary schools students' perceptions on how guidance and counselling services influence their social adjustments in selected public secondary schools in Keiyo North Sub County, Kenya. This paper is guided by the social learning theory advanced by Albert Bandura. The target population for the study involved secondary school students. Students from 7 secondary schools out of 21 were included in the sample. The researcher collected data through questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme by the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics. Research results showed that more than half of students perceived guidance and counselling services to be helpful in social adjustments. ANOVA statistics showed that there existed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in students' perceptions on the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' social adjustment. Those who rated guidance and counselling services highly had higher adjustment scores compared to those who rated provision of guidance and counselling as average or low. The study, therefore, recommended that guidance and counselling services need to be regularly provided to students in secondary schools to aid in their social adjustment.

Keywords: Perceptions, Guidance and Counselling, Social, Adjustment

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Students at the secondary school level are generally at the adolescence stage and are therefore confounded with so many issues happening in their own lives, environment and also their education. The stage of adolescence tends to be the most difficult one throughout the life cycle. According to Melgosa (2009), many boys and girls of the adolescence stage seem to cause problems in the family, school, and community. And above all, they suffer from these same problems. At the same time, adolescents possess highly positive traits which if properly channelled are of benefit to everyone. Students, therefore, need to adjust to this new, expansive and challenging environment in order to get maximum benefits from the school (Mugambi, 2017). This calls for guidance and counselling services that would assist them in their social adjustment. Guidance and counselling programmes in a school assist students to

harmonize their abilities, interests and values and thereby develop their full potential. All this is geared towards improving the self-image of the students and facilitating better achievement in academic performance (Njeri, 2007).

Ramakrishnan and Jalajakumari (2013) noted that the need for guidance and counselling services has increased because of the multiplicity of problems that face students in various domains of life. Students encounter problems in their school life while at the same time they are not mature enough to critically evaluate the baffling situations that they are faced with. Therefore, they need somebody to help them in finding solutions to the problems and thus avoid conflicts. Guidance and Counselling are effective in enhancing student adjustment to school social environments in public boarding secondary schools (Gatua, Sindabi & Chepchieng, 2015). The adjustment refers to a process in which an individual find and adopt modes of behaviour suitable to the changes in the environment (Gatua, 2012). Therefore, students adjustment involves student general adaptation to own environment and the demands of life such as the way one relates to other people, that is interpersonal behaviour, handles responsibilities, deals with stress and meets own needs and life satisfaction.

The need for guidance and counselling services in all secondary schools cannot be overstated due to the increasing complexities of modern life that have placed heavy demands and responsibilities on secondary school students (Gatua et al., 2015). These students are faced with numerous personal, academic, social and emotional needs and problems in which if unattended could lead to host patterns of undesirable behaviours (Weiten & Lloyd 2003; Adeusi, Olujide & Omotola, 2016). Virtually, all countries have established channels to intensify and improve guidance and counselling services in their respective learning institutions in an attempt to address tenets of students' behaviour. Various countries across the world introduced guidance and counselling services to address the social needs of students in secondary schools. Guidance and Counselling services began in America in the early 1900 to help students in their educational development and career aspirations (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001 in Mugambi, Karimi & Kipng'eno, 2015). In Kenya since independence, the government through the Ministry of Education has embraced the establishment of guidance and counselling programmes in primer and secondary schools throughout the country (MOE, 2008).

Despite the efforts by the Ministry of Education and other educational stakeholders in providing guidance and counselling services, research reports show a different picture on achievement of goals as Awuor, Jairo and Raburu (2018) found out that this has realized very little achievement.

Topister, Songok, Ong'unya and Nabwire (2014) reported that schools in Siaya County had experienced problems of student unrest, indiscipline cases and poor social relationship among students and teachers. Further, Mugambi et al. (2015) observed that there were indicators that maladjustment still remains a challenge in secondary schools in Kenya. This has cast doubts on the role being played by Guidance and Counselling in helping students to adjust to the school environment. Therefore, there was a need to determine students' perceptions on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in enhancing social adjustment in public secondary schools in Keiyo North Sub County.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Secondary school students' perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services have not been assessed to the degree that these other stakeholders' perceptions have been assessed (parents and teachers). Research studies have shown that incidents of indiscipline and poor academic performance have been on the rise in most Kenyan secondary schools in the past five years and specifically in Keiyo North Sub County. This has resulted in the expulsion of students from secondary schools. The wastage of the youth as potential resources of our country is still lamented as the majority of them turn to self-destruction through decadent acts like engaging in the many forms of immoral behaviour resulting to drugs and substance abuse, HIV/AIDS spread and adolescent pregnancies. It is against this backdrop that the paper investigates the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' social adjustment.

3.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1 Guidance and Counselling Services and Social Adjustment

According to Melgosa (2005), sociability is a basic instinct and each person impulsively searches for companionship with others like themselves. Unfortunately, some learners in schools do not know how to behave in a group. They tend to be timid, shy, and self-conscious and generally avoid meeting people (Rao, 2002). Tindi and Silsil (2008) also note that young people who lack social skills are at risk of violence. They are likely to behave in aggressive ways and do not think about the consequences of their actions and usually start fights with peers who ignore them. According to Erdley, Nangle, Newman, and Carpenter (2001), peer relations that children experience influence their adjustment. This is from the developmental perspective whereby individuals develop diverse needs that can be satisfied by distinctive social interactions at different phases of development.

Most secondary school students are at the adolescence stage. Adolescence is a period when social acceptance is typically perceived by students to be of great importance (Gerner & Wilson, 2005; Melgosa, 2005). In a study of English students, Chedzoy and Burden (2005) found that students identify "fitting in" as being of utmost importance during this period. An adolescent who is not well adjusted socially is not likely to achieve well in school and the counsellor's role in assisting an individual to perform well in school is inevitable (Osa-Edoh & Iyamu, 2012). It is a fact that in schools the world over, children with different abilities, different skills and different cultures get educated together, providing them with an opportunity to hone their adjustment skills. Indeed, peer relations are important to adolescents notes by Ryan (2000) and as such the loss or change of a relationship can have a significant impact on students' identity development and ultimately school functioning. As such, during school life, a child has to learn to co-exist and co-operate with fellow students and teachers of different religions, different cultures, different opinions, and a different outlook towards life.

It is not uncommon to find learners in schools who may be aggressive, ill-mannered, and crude. This is a lack of adjustment (Rao, 2002). Such learners display anti-social tendencies such as bullying. Bullying is usually compensation for poor self-concept. Learners hide fears and feelings of inadequacy behind acts of bullying. It is seen as an attempt to strike back at an unfriendly world or seek attention due to feelings of insecurity, and poor socialization (Birichi & Rukungu, 2009). Such learners have also been reported to hold more negative attitudes towards institutional authorities for example schools and teachers (Adair, Dixon,

Moore & Sutherland, 2000). The role of the teacher counsellor is to help such learners to avoid these problems of social adjustment. Indeed, guidance and counselling services in a school should ideally enable students to acquire social skills which are vital in interacting with other students, teachers, and the school administration.

Generally, school is the area in which adolescents spend the majority of their time. This is where, according to Desocio and Hootman (2004), students will learn how to socialize, and where they achieve “developmental milestones” and if not properly managed can lead to more severe health problems in adolescence and adulthood (p. 192). Osterman (2000) adds that occasions within the school context that give rise to students collaborating and engaging in discourse and positive social interactions are apt to stimulate further pro-social behaviours. This in turn should be associated with overall school adjustment. More research studies show that in a school context, peers are very important in the process of socialization. These include a study by Steinberg and Morris (2001) which found that the majority of adolescents are influenced by their peers because they admire them and respect their opinion. This is called peer pressure. Peer pressure is the acceptance to be controlled by group cultures, behaviours and habits (Birichi & Rukunga, 2009). It is noted as a factor that leads to attempts to experiment with drugs and other harmful behaviours, particularly during adolescence, peer pressure begins to influence young people and it can be harmful. Birichi and Rukunga (2009) add that guidance and counselling services come in handy in ensuring that negative influence does not occur. Moreover, people generally strive to be comfortable in their surroundings by having their psychological needs met (such as love and affirmation) through the social networks which they inhabit. Some researches indicate that adolescents who are violent at school are in most cases those who have been rejected by peers (Hay, Payne & Chaldwick, 2004; Werner, 2004).

Peers indeed can play a beneficial role to individual students. Adolescents are constantly comparing themselves to their peers to sort out a sense of identity. For this reason, peers can influence pro-social behaviours such as empathy- the ability to understand the perspective of others. Positive friends can also be associated with improved academic performance (Barrell, 2009). In fact, acceptance by friends is an integral part of the adolescent’s life in school as reported in a study by Vitaro, Laroque, Janosz and Trembley (2001) who note that peer rejection during middle or high school could predict the possibility of an individual dropping out of high school. Researchers have acknowledged the effectiveness of school counsellors in teaching social skills (Verduyn, Lord & Forest, 1990). It has been reported that schools with a more fully implemented guidance programme had students who reported that their schools had a more positive climate with greater feelings of belonging and safety at school and classes are less likely to be interrupted and peers behave better (Lapan, et al. 2003). Young people who are well received and hold positions among their peers are candidates for positive adjustment (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Zettergren, 2003).

Further research findings show that children with positive peer relations tend to perform higher academically whereas children with peer problems tend to experience a wide range of academic difficulties, including school engagement (Kuperminc, Leadbeater & Blatt, 2001) and dropping out of school (Cairns, Cairns & Neckerman, 1999). According to Kesici (2007), a student whose guidance and counselling needs are satisfied can establish a harmonious relationship with friends and family. A very limited number of studies have been undertaken

to investigate secondary school students' perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on social adjustment, especially in Kenya. This study, therefore, intended to fill the literature gap.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on the social learning theory advanced by Bandura (1986). According to the theory, learning is a process where behaviours are learnt or acquired from the environment. One way of learning is through social observation and imitation. This theory explains delinquency as a behaviour learnt through the complex process of socialisation. The theory postulates that the behaviour is reflective of people observing and imitating others and imagining the consequence of their own behaviour. The theory advocates that human behaviour is modified using learning principles to change behaviour (Sindabi & Omulema, 2001). The behavioural approach emphasizes that the client define goals in behavioural terms provide resources and encouragement in helping clients more towards goals and helping clients with different problems (Patterson, 1973). Teacher counsellors can therefore apply this in counselling students concerning students' social adjustments issues and challenges. Makinde (1984) noted that counselling effectiveness and outcome of counselling are assessed by change in the specific students' behaviour. This implies that counsellors can use behavioural counselling to create an enabling environment for the students to modify their behaviours in order to solve their social problems through the creation of learning conditions. Teacher counsellors can use behavioural techniques like self-management programmes and self-directed behaviours which may deal with learning, study and time management skills in schools. This will foster the students' social behaviours. The student will drive towards growth, health and adjustment (Makinde, 1984). Therefore, a good environment is created by the teacher counsellor. School can provide room for a good self-concept that will boost morale and social behaviours. This explains why the theory was used in this paper.

4.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ex post facto research design was used in this study. It was used because the independent variable has already occurred and therefore cannot be manipulated. "Ex post facto" translates to "after the fact" and this means that the research of the study was done after the actual event (guidance and counselling) took place and it is commonly used for research on human behaviour. The respondents for the study were students in 21 public secondary schools in Keiyo North Sub County. A sample size of 7 public secondary schools was chosen. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. Data collected was analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods. Data analysis has been done using descriptive statistics. Further Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) has been computed to check if there existed a significant difference between students' perceptions on the effect of guidance and counselling on social adjustments. The results are presented in charts, tables and narrations.

5.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Perceptions on the Influence of Services on Social Adjustment

The objective of the study sought to establish secondary school students' perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on their social adjustment. To achieve this

objective, the following question was asked: Are there significant statistical differences in students’ perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on their social adjustment? The null hypothesis stated; there are no significant statistical differences in secondary school students’ perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on their emotional adjustment. Therefore, the students were asked to rate their perceptions regarding the influence of guidance of counselling services on their social adjustment on some ten items. The descriptive statistics results from responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Description of the Influence of Services on Social Adjustment

Perceptions on Influence of Services on Social Adjustment	Negative		Undecided		Positive	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Getting along well with other students	45	13.7	27	8.2	257	78.1
Choosing friends wisely in school	39	11.9	39	11.9	251	76.3
Getting very involved in social activities	71	21.6	45	13.7	213	64.7
Participation in extracurricular activities	68	20.7	51	15.5	210	63.8
Interacting well with the opposite sex	108	32.8	37	11.2	184	55.9
Confiding in my school friends is easier	78	23.7	75	22.8	176	53.5
Fitting well with peers in school	91	27.7	66	20.1	172	52.3
Feeling cared for by friends	94	28.6	64	19.5	171	52.0
Dealing with negative peer pressure	105	31.9	54	16.4	170	51.7
Overcoming homesickness in school	122	37.1	48	14.6	159	48.3

Results in Table 1 indicate that the majority, 257 (78.1%) of the participants agreed they were able to get along well with fellow students after receiving guidance and counselling services. Few, 45 (13.7%) disagreed and 27 (8.2%) were undecided. This suggests that students are helped to develop friendship and companionship and this makes them interact well with their fellow students in school. Secondly, 251 (76.3%) of the participants also agreed with the statement that the guidance and counselling services had enabled them to be able to choose their friends wisely while in school. It also helped them to get involved in different social activities 213 (64.7%) like attending symposia and entertainment. Only 71 (21.6%) of the participants disagreed with the statement while 45 (13.7%) were undecided. The result implies that students are able to join social clubs and activities as part of extracurricular activities. This is aimed not only at helping them to identify their skills and hidden talents but also at helping them develop social skills.

Moreover, 210 (63.8%) agreed that they participated in and feel satisfied after participation in extracurricular activities, 68 (20.7%) disagreed. while 51 (15.5%) were undecided about the statement. More than half 184 (55.9%) of the participants also reported that guidance and counselling services helped them to interact well and easily in schools. This interaction removes the state of isolation or loneliness that some students experience while in school

which affects their feeling of social adjustments. However, 108 (32.8%) of the participants disagreed with the statement and this could imply that probably their needs for guidance and counselling services were not related to social adjustments issues. Quite a large number of 176 (53.5%) of the participants supported the statement that they found it easy to confide in their friends at school, 78 (23.7%) did not while 75 (22.8%) were undecided. This implies that to a moderate degree, students are able to gain enough social skills to be able to confide in their friends after receiving counselling services. Furthermore, at good number, 172 (52.3%) of the participants reported that after receiving guidance and counselling services, students feel that they are fitting in well with their peers at school, whereas 91 (27.7%) did not while 66 (20.1%) were undecided on the statement. This therefore generally implies that students perceive that guidance and counselling services offered in schools in the sub-county only moderately help them acquire skills that help them fit well with their peers.

In addition, more than half 171 (52.0%) agreed, 64 (19.5%) were undecided while 94 (28.6%) of the participants disagreed that they felt their friends were caring towards them after consuming counselling services. This implies that half of the students felt their friends cared about them after seeking and receiving guidance and counselling services. Further, 170 (51.7%) agreed that guidance and counselling services assisted them to deal with negative peer pressure, 105 (31.9%) disagreed while 54 (16.4%) remained neutral. This implies that most students perceive that they are able to deal with negative peer pressure after receiving guidance and counselling services. Lastly, there were students' responses on whether guidance and counselling services helped them deal with homesickness while in school. Quite a number of the participants 159 (48.3%) agreed with the statement, 48 (14.6%) were undecided while 122 (37.1%) disagreed with the statement. This shows that to a large extent, students perceive that the guidance and counselling services do not address issues concerning students' homesickness regularly while at school.

5.2 Interview Responses on Influence of Services on Social Adjustment

A total of 16 participants were interviewed concerning their perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling on their social adjustment. The interview question also sought to find the reasons for the responses. The participants provided both positive and negative responses. It was established that 68.75% (11/16) responded positively whereas 31.25% (5/16) responded negatively. Some of the reasons given by those who responded positively were that teacher counsellors were always in the frontline in advising learners against the negative influence of bad company, imparting social skills and ensuring that students learn to interact well with peers thus avoiding negative peer pressure. It is also ensured that students learnt good mannerisms, tolerance and confidence. This was reported to be done through the invitation of speakers for group counselling sessions or when students seek individual counselling from the teacher counsellor. A participant from a boys' boarding school had this to say:

When I was a new student in my school I was very shy and timid. I did not know how to make friends and felt lonely most of the time. One time a speaker was invited to take us through socialization skills and I can now confidently interact with all types of people. Students have also been advised to join at least one club of their choice and engage in various extracurricular activities.

Those who responded negatively cited reasons like unavailability of the teacher counsellor, lack of time, fear, embarrassment and mistrust for teacher counsellors. As indicated in chapter three, students' ratings on the information on guidance and counselling services were scored as follows; poor (10-24), not sure or average (25-34) and good (35-50). To arrive at the results, a cross-tabulation analysis was computed and the descriptive results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Ratings of Services and Influence on Social Adjustment

Perceptions on influence of Social Adjustment				
Students' ratings	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Poor	85	2.8706	1.18310	.12832
Average	109	3.4404	.64451	.06173
Good	135	4.0148	.69093	.05947
Total	329	3.5289	.94993	.05237

Results in Table 2 reveal that the participants who rated provision of guidance and counselling services as poor scored the least mean on perceptions on the influence of the service on social adjustment ($M=2.87$ and $SD=1.18$). For those who rated the services as average, they scored moderately on perceptions on the influence on social adjustment ($M=3.44$ and $SD=0.64$) while those who gave good ratings had the highest score on their perceptions of the influence of the services on social adjustments ($M=4.01$ and $SD=0.69$). The results are summarised in Figure 1

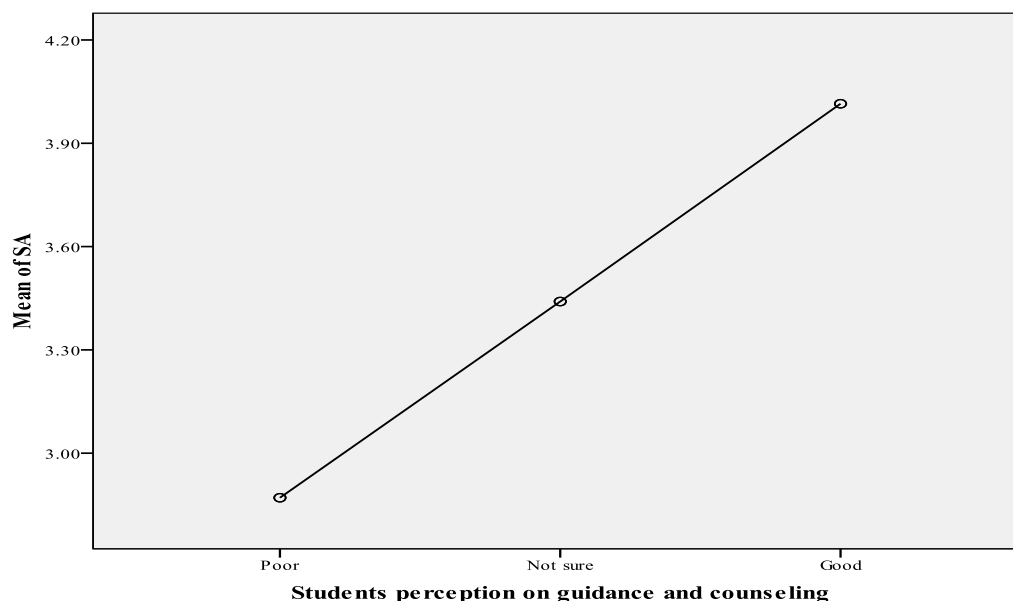


Figure 1 Ratings of Services and Influence on Social Adjustment

It can be seen in Figure 1 that those students who rated guidance and counselling services as good perceived it as having the highest influence on social adjustment followed by those who rated it as average. Those who rated the services as poor had the lowest perceptions of the influence of the service on social adjustment. The implication of these findings is that as students' ratings on guidance and counselling services improve, their perceptions of its influence on their social adjustment become more positive and vice versa.

To test the significance of the findings, ANOVA was computed at a 95% confidence level. The summary of the results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 ANOVA on Influence of Services on Social Adjustment

Social Adjustment					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	69.566	2	34.783	50.083	.000
Within Groups	226.409	326	.695		
Total	295.976	328			

The ANOVA values were $F(2, 326) = 50.083, p = 0.001$. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that there exist significant differences in students' perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' social adjustment. The results indicate that students who rated guidance and counselling services as good reported higher perceptions on their influence on their social adjustment than those who rated the guidance and counselling services in school as poor or average. It was therefore concluded that there exist significant statistical differences in secondary school students' perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on their social adjustment.

5.3 Discussions of Findings

A person cannot live or study by himself or herself. Students obviously need the companionship of others so as to learn in schools. Therefore, social adjustment is accepted to be a critical requirement for learners to effectively sail through secondary education. The objective of the study was therefore to describe secondary school students' perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on their social adjustment. The findings of the study revealed that the mean score for the participants' perceptions on the influence of guidance and counselling services on social adjustment for those students who rated the services as poor was lower ($M = 2.87$) compared to that of those who rated the services as average and good which was ($M = 3.44$) and ($M = 4.01$) respectively. In describing whether there are significant differences in students' perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on social adjustment, an ANOVA test was carried out and the results were $F(2, 326) = 50.083, p = 0.001$. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. As seen in the descriptive statistics, most participants tended to have positive perceptions on the influence of guidance and counselling services on social adjustments in secondary schools in Keiyo North Sub-County. This was because a majority (78.1%) of them mentioned that the services assisted them to get along well with their fellow students, 76.3% indicated that it

helped them to choose their friends wisely while 64.7% asserted that it assisted them to get very involved in school and social activities. These findings are consistent with Verduyn et al. (1990) whose study reported the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in teaching social skills. The provision of guidance and counselling also appeared to benefit students as it helped them to interact with others easily, fit well with their peers and helped them to deal with negative peer pressure.

The importance of guidance and counselling services in influencing social adjustment was also very evident in students' perceptions of its influence based on the nature of services provided in the schools is. This suggests that schools should strive to provide the best guidance and counselling services that are aimed at addressing the social challenges that students in schools are facing. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Lapan et al. (2003), whose findings show that schools with fully implemented guidance and counselling programmes had a more positive climate with greater feelings of belonging and safety. Indeed students whose guidance and counselling needs are satisfied could also establish a harmonious relationship with friends and family (Kesici, 2007). This came out clearly with many participants who gave positive responses during the interview suggesting that guidance and counselling services offered in schools had helped them to overcome shyness after being equipped with social skills (for example through assertiveness training) which have enabled them to be able to make friends easily. However, other participants cited issues like lack of time, unavailability of the teacher counsellor when needed and fear that prevents them from opening up and sharing the social challenges they have with the teacher counsellor. Such learners end up giving in to negative peer pressure or living a lonely life in school. This, ultimately, does have a negative impact on the students' learning.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students in Kenyan secondary schools today face a variety of social challenges which impact negatively their school adjustment. Social relationships have been found to be another major area of concern. From the interview session, it was realized that whereas participants perceived that guidance and counselling services had addressed social issues, there are those who perceived that the services had failed to address them. Ideally, these issues need to be addressed fully for learners to achieve their full potential in all aspects of school life. Quantitative data showed that the majority of students held positive perceptions of the contribution of guidance and counselling services towards social adjustments. ANOVA statistics showed that students' perceptions differed ($p < 0.05$). In recommendations, there is a need for guidance and counselling services to be regularly provided to assist students' social adjustments in secondary schools.

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