INFLUENCE OF SELECTED PEER VICTIMIZATION MITIGATING FACTORS ON STUDENTS' PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BOMET COUNTY, KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

This thesis is my original work, and it has not been presented for the award of a degree in this or any other university. No part of this thesis may be reproduced without the prior written permission of the author and Moi University.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family, whose support over the years has made it possible for me to come this far.

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ABSTRACT

Students' psychosocial adjustment in school is essential for their overall well-being, effective learning, and positive social functioning. However, the psychosocial adjustment of most students in Kenyan public secondary schools and in counties like Bomet has been unsatisfactory as evidenced by increased cases of peer pressure, academic stress, and teacher-student conflicts, among other challenges. Peer victimisation has been identified as one of the primary causes of deteriorating students' psychosocial health in secondary schools. Empirical studies reveal that peer, school and family-related factors and guidance and counselling services can mitigate against this vice. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of selected peer victimisation mitigation factors on students' psychosocial adjustment in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. The specific objectives were to examine the influence of peer, school and family-related factors on the psychosocial adjustment of students. The study also assessed the role of guidance and counselling on psychosocial adjustment. This inquiry was anchored on social-ecological and psychosocial theories. It was guided by a pragmatist research philosophy and used the convergent parallel mixed method research design. The accessible population comprised 294 deputy principals, 285 guidance and counselling teachers and 29152 form three students from public secondary schools in Bomet County. Stratified, proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 30 deputy principals, 29 guidance and counselling teachers and 360 students who participated in the study. Data was collected using guidance and counselling teachers' and students' questionnaires, and the deputy principals' interview guide. Qualitative data were analysed thematically, while quantitative data were analysed using Pearson's correlations, multiple and hierarchical regression tests. The results indicated that the majority of schools had peer support systems, and policies, rules and regulations which guide their operations. Families also supported their children both in school and at home, and guidance and counselling services were provided to learners in the institutions. The results also showed that the relationship between peer [$r(358) = .615$, $p = .000$], school [$r(358) = .637$, $p = .000$] and family $r(358) = .689$, $p = .000$ related factors and students' psychosocial adjustment was positive and statistically significant. Hierarchical regressions test revealed a statistically significant change in R^2 from 28.1% to 45.9%, $F(2, 357) = 151.303$, $p = .000$. The study concluded that schools had peer support systems and mechanisms for assisting students to adjust psychologically and socially, and schools have policies, programmes, rules and regulations which guide their operations. In addition, families support their children both by guiding and providing them with the basics of life and guidance and counselling services are provided to students in schools. It was also concluded that peer, school and family-related factors influence students' psychosocial adjustment. Further, G&C services moderate the relationship between these three mitigating factors and students' psychosocial adjustment. It was recommended that education stakeholders should organise campaigns against bullying, make students aware of available peer and psychosocial support systems and strengthen them. Students should also be encouraged to report all cases of peer victimisation and seek psychosocial support whenever needed. Further, guidance and counselling programmes in schools should be strengthened through training and the provision of resources.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CG	Guidance and Counselling
GoK	Government of Kenya
MoE	Ministry of Education
SIT	Social Identity Theory
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Peer victimisation, also known as bullying, is a major obstacle that students and school management face globally (Ajibewa et al., 2025). While it may be common in some school environments, it can have severe social and psychological effects on those who are targeted. These effects can be more detrimental than other forms of mistreatment students experience, such as corporal punishment, family conflicts, and abuse. They can negatively impact their academic performance and participation in school activities. Victimisation can be done through direct actions such as stealing, hitting, taunting, teasing, threatening, or indirectly through exclusion, making the student feel socially isolated.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2018) considers Peer victimisation as acts of violence meted out to the victim through physical and verbal abuse. It also includes violent behaviour that can be characterised by prodding, undermining other peers, nagging, prodding, maltreatment, and any acts to embarrass a student in front of their peers. Other examples include aggressive touch, sarcasm, threats, gossip, verbal bullying, and isolation.

According to Grew et al. (2022), the influence of peer relationships in schools can either be positive or negative. However, even though different schools of thought agree that peer victimisation is part and parcel of the schools' micro-systems, its effect can negatively influence the learning outcomes of the victims. Victims often suffer from poor self-confidence, self-esteem, self-belief, and social anxiety (Maiwa et al., 2021). Long-term internalisation of bullying effects without any school intervention often leads to psychosocial challenges for the affected students, which may lead to adapting

to the situation, becoming a perpetrator, or dropping out of school (Da Silva et al., 2020).

Global statistics indicate that students victimised in schools often develop psychological and social issues ranging from isolation, drug abuse, absenteeism, and dropping out of school (UNESCO, 2017; UNICEF, 2018). An assessment of profiles of externalising and internalising symptoms shown by bullied students by Eastman et al. (2018) established that the students showed signs of depression and anxiety (internalising) and delinquency linked with violence against other students (externalising). However, most examined students fell under the internalising category, with most of them developing psychological problems associated with withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem than showing indications of becoming bullies in return.

Studies have established that the indicators of psychological adjustment are the consequences of peer victimisation. Several studies have revealed that peer victimisation can lead to mental disorders and social anxiety among adolescents. Low self-esteem and negative self-evaluation can also lead to a decreased capacity to engage in social or interpersonal relationships (Onsoti, 2018). Da Silva et al. (2020) noted that bullying could cause long-term mental problems for the victimised students, some extending to several years after completion of basic education.

Hurd et al. (2018) indicate that long-term internalisation of bullying ordeal in school increases the probability of the victim becoming a perpetrator as a coping mechanism or withdrawing from learning and social activities. However, appropriate school interventions can be found to reduce the negative effects of peer victimisation and increase the student's ability to adjust socially and psychologically.

A report by UNICEF (2018) established that over 150 million students aged between 13 and 15 experienced peer victimisation in and around the school. A third of these students indicated having experienced bullying in schools, and as a result, their learning outcomes were negatively affected. Davis et al. (2020) contend that exposure of children or youths to violence is a common phenomenon in the United States of America (USA). It is estimated that more than 80% of the youths or early adolescents report having witnessed violence in school, while over 90% report having witnessed violence in their community. Further, an average of 22% of youths have witnessed violence in their homes, with over 60% of them reporting having been victimised.

Davis et al. (2020) established that students who had been exposed to violence at their homes and in the community had a high chance of becoming aggressive and perpetrators of violence in schools. Lack of parental support and parental awareness, and monitoring of adolescents enhanced the adolescents' antisocial behaviour among young adolescents in Spain (Cutrín et al., 2018). Such behaviours included drug abuse, peer deviancy, and violence in schools. These characteristics were found to have a negative effect on the students' performance in school.

Parental monitoring involves prompting the child to voluntarily disclose any challenges they face in school, or getting the information by asking directly from the child or the child's peers. Furthermore, parents can control their children's activities by enforcing restrictions, thus controlling their freedom to do things without disclosing them.

In Canada, DeWit et al. (2012) found that the students' perception of the favorability of the school culture affected their social and psychological adjustment in schools. Measures of favorableness include assessment of school rules and regulations, student autonomy in decision-making in school matters affecting them, receiving support from

students and teachers, minimum student conflict, and appropriate resolution mechanisms. These factors were found to minimise disciplinary issues among students. They further enhanced self-esteem among students, controlled oppositional-defiant disorder, substance abuse, and conduct disorder. Further, increased levels of supervision, monitoring, and enhanced teacher-student relationships were found to have a positive influence on the students' academic outcomes.

In an evaluation of the means through which peer victimisation and counselling influenced the aspiration of the student to join university, Grew et al. (2022) established that students who were victimised in the early years of secondary school had low aspirations to join university. However, teacher engagement in school positively influenced the students' aspirations. Teacher support and counselling at the early stages of victimisation lead to higher aspirations in the later years of secondary education.

Acquah et al. (2014) consider peer victimisation a public health issue among adolescents in Ghana. Observations of risk factors associated with peer victimisation from lower-middle-income economies established that drug abuse and alcohol-related factors increased the risk of being victimised. In addition, victimised students often use drugs to overcome anxiety. However, parental support and support from other students reduced the consequences of peer victimisation. In addition, school intervention through the introduction of programs promoting student integration led to students accepting each other in class and in other social groups.

An investigation to assess the prevalence of psychological distress factors among in-school adolescents in Tanzania established that 20.6% of the students between form one and three were affected by a single psychological distress factor, while 10.3% were affected by more than one factor (Bakesia & Abwalaba, 2023). Peer victimisation,

tobacco use, and peer pressure were found to have a major psychological distress on the students. School intervention through counselling, peer support, and disciplinary action helped the affected student to adjust well, as indicated by increased school attendance (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2020).

In Kenya, any form of peer victimisation has been banned since 2013; however, it remains rampant in the school (cite source). According to the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) (2004) report, the Kenyan government has made an effort to ensure that all citizens achieve education. However, the adjustment for the students joining form one has not been given sufficient attention, resulting in a high dropout rate. In assessing the prevalence of student victimisation in Nairobi county, Ndetei et al. (2014) established that between 640 (63.2%) and 828 (81.1%) students in public secondary schools in Nairobi had reported having been bullied. The type of victimisation is significantly based on the age of the student, gender, the place where the offence occurred, and the class of study.

A study by Mutiso et al. (2019) found an association between peer victimisation and negative psychological, social, and environmental problems in the student. The bully student's character was associated with personal behaviour and family-related problems. In addition, other than bullying, the student had more chances of indulging in substance abuse. Mokaya et al. (2022) indicated that most of the students victimised in public secondary schools developed short to long-term mental issues; these included suicidality, depression, and some committed suicide. The risk of bullying was associated with the rise of substance abuse among students. A cross-sectional study targeting students who joined form one found that 87.7% of the 539 students from 5 public secondary schools had encountered different forms of peer victimisation.

Several studies have established that students' social and psychological disorders can result from peer victimisation (Mansini, 2022). The effects of peer victimisation have been found to range from minor to severe, depending on the type adopted by the perpetrator. These effects lead to students' psychosocial adjustment challenges. Literature shows that peer, school and family-related factors can mitigate against peer victimisation and enhance psychosocial adjustment. Further literature also shows that guidance and counselling have a role in promoting psychosocial adjustments. Previous studies have not conclusively addressed the extent to which these factors influence students' psychosocial adjustment in school. Therefore, the study investigated the influence of these peer victimisation mitigating factors on psychosocial adjustment in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Students' psychosocial adjustment is essential for holistic growth and academic success. However, many secondary school students are not able to adjust psychosocially due to peer victimisation, which includes bullying, harassment, and social exclusion. Studies conducted in Kenya have reported increasing incidences of bullying and other forms of peer victimisation among secondary school students, with some cases escalating to unrest, violence, and even student suicides. Bomet County, like many other regions in Kenya, has also experienced peer victimisation challenges in public secondary schools, as evidenced by reports of disciplinary cases, frequent absenteeism, and deteriorating academic performance among affected students. While existing policies such as the Basic Education Act and child protection guidelines advocate for safe learning environments, the persistence of peer victimisation suggests that these interventions have been insufficient or ineffective.

Research shows that mitigating factors such as supportive peer relationships, positive school climates and policies, and strong family involvement play a critical role in buffering the negative effects of victimisation and enhancing psychosocial well-being. However, there is limited empirical evidence within the Kenyan context, particularly in Bomet County, on how these factors influence students' psychosocial adjustment. This gap in knowledge makes it difficult for educators, policymakers, and families to design comprehensive interventions to support students' psychosocial adjustment. Consequently, this study investigated the influence of selected peer victimisation mitigating factors, specifically peer, school, and family-related factors, on the psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. It was envisaged that the findings would provide a basis for evidence-based strategies for fostering safer school environments and improving students' overall well-being.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main focus of the study was to assess the influence of selected peer victimisation mitigating factors on the students' psychosocial adjustment in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya.

1.4 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

i. Assess the influence of peer-related factors on the psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County.
ii. Examine the influence of school-related factors on the Psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County

iii. Evaluate the influence of family-related factors on the Psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County.

iv. Assess the role of guidance and counselling on the Psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following research hypotheses:

H_{01}:The relationship between peer-related factors and students' psychosocial adjustment is not statistically significant.

H_{02}: School-related factors do not have a statistically significant relationship with the Psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County.

H_{03}:The family background does not have a statistically significant relationship with the Psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County.

H_{04}: The moderating effect of guidance counselling on the relationship between peer victimisation mitigating factors and students' Psychosocial adjustment is not statistically significant.

1.6 Justification of the Study

The reason for conducting this study was to examine how peer victimisation mitigating factors influenced students' psychosocial adjustment in public secondary schools and how they adapt psychologically and socially to the school environment, allowing them to engage in their learning activities without hindrance. Despite the efforts of the government to do away with peer victimisation, the vice is still rampant, especially in public secondary schools, with reports indicating that boys are mostly affected by the vice. The Kamunge Commission on Education Reforms established that guidance and

counselling had not been implemented in all schools. The Basic Education Act 2013 requires that the school administration provide a conducive environment that offers social and psychological compatibility for all learners; however, peer victimisation cases are still being reported. It was necessary and timely to carry out this study so as to gain insights into the influence of peer victimisation mitigating factors, such as peer, school, and family-related factors, in secondary schools. The environmental changes witnessed globally have influenced changes in family structure, socioeconomic factors, and school-related factors.

The study examined whether these specific factors were responsible for perpetuating the vice in public secondary schools and the remedies to minimise or eradicate them.

In addition, of late, the consequences of peer victimisation have become worse as forms of bullying have changed from the traditionally known physical abuse to more sophisticated forms of social exclusion and cyberbullying, which have led the victims to have low self-esteem, self-efficacy, and sometimes to be suicidal. So far, no conclusive study has been carried out in the sub-Saharan region and specifically in Kenya to assess the role of guidance and counselling in students' psychological and social adaptation to the learning environment.

Finally, according to Winny (2017) and Koskei, Tonui, and Simiyu (2015), many students are dropping out of school in Bomet county, and the majority of these students have pointed out that peer pressure, peer victimisation in the form of bullying, and other methods as the main causes of dropping out of school. It is for this reason that the researcher selected this location for the study.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The management of public secondary schools will significantly benefit from these studies' findings, as they will gain insight into the major causes and the effect peer victimisation has on students. In addition, the school administration will be made aware of the importance of guidance and counselling to students in school. Policymakers such as the teachers' service commission and the ministry of education will be able to improve policies to address the vice of peer victimisation in schools. This will minimise these cases or bring the vice to an end. Academicians and other scholars interested in furthering studies or conducting studies related to students affected by peer victimisation and the psychosocial adjustment of students in schools will use the study as a point of reference and for literature review. Finally, the studies will enhance theory development and the advancement of learning theories and other educational theories, such as the social identity theory.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The main focus of the study was to investigate the influence of peer victimisation on students' psychosocial adjustment in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. The study's independent variables were peer-related, school-related, and family-related factors. The dependent variable was measured by the rate of student dropout or completion, and performance of the student in academic and extracurricular activities, and their mental health. The study was carried out in Bomet County, where all public secondary schools formed the targeted population. The study was anchored on social-ecological and psychosocial theories. Furthermore, the study adopted a research philosophy with a mixed research approach and a convergent parallel mixed research design. The study was carried out in Bomet County between 2022 and 2023.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

A limitation in research is the practical or theoretical shortcomings of a study that are often outside of the researcher's control (Rupar, 2025). It is a constraint or weakness in the study that is associated with a research design, methodology, data collection, or analysis that is beyond the researcher's full control, which may affect the interpretation, validity, or generalizability of the findings (Sumptera et al., 2023). This study had several limitations, among these was the limited stakeholder perspectives since data was not collected from parents or family representatives. Data were collected at a single point in time from samples drawn from public secondary schools in Bomet County, which limits causal inference and generalizability. Measures relied on self-reports about peer victimisation, a sensitive topic, by students, guidance and counselling teachers, and deputy principals' interviews, which could have been affected by social desirability and recall bias. Although a convergent mixed-methods design was used to triangulate findings, full integration of quantitative and qualitative strands was sometimes constrained by limited interview depth and potential interviewer effects.

1.10 Assumptions of the Study

The study was conducted on the assumption that:

i. All the public secondary schools in Bomet County had a guidance and counselling department with a qualified guidance and counselling teacher.
ii. The respondents were honest and gave information that was a true reflection of what was on the ground.
iii. The sampled respondents would accurately represent the population, and therefore, it will be possible to use the results for generalisation.
iv. That the factors considered in this study had the highest influence on the students' psychosocial adjustment in school.

1.11 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the social ecological and psychosocial theories. The two theories were selected because the Social-ecological theory assisted the study in exploring how interactions at the peer, family, and school levels collectively mitigate against peer victimisation and shape students' emotional, social, and behavioural outcomes. The psychosocial theory, on the other hand, helped in understanding the influence of society on an individual's personality and its development through different phases created by psychosocial crises.

1.11.1 Social-Ecological Theory

The Socio-Ecological Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), explains how individual behaviour and development are shaped by the dynamic interaction between individuals and the multiple environmental systems in which they are embedded (Crawford, 2020). It emphasises that psychosocial adjustment is not only a personal issue but also a product of broader social, cultural, and structural influences. The theory also emphasises that an individual does not exist in isolation but is embedded in multiple, interconnected systems that influence their development and behaviour. These systems range from immediate environments (e.g., family and peers) to broader societal influences (e.g., cultural norms and policies) (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). A change in one system can ripple through and affect others. For example, a supportive school policy on anti-bullying can improve peer relationships, which in turn enhances a student's psychosocial adjustment.

Socio-ecological theory was appropriate for the following reasons: The study investigated how peer, school, and family-related factors mitigate the influence of peer victimisation on the psychosocial adjustment of students exposed to peer victimisation. It aids in the understanding of psychosocial adjustment, given that it is a multifaceted

construct that is influenced by individual, relational, and environmental factors. This theory provides a multi-level framework, allowing the study to explore how interactions at the peer, family, and school levels collectively shape students' emotional, social, and behavioural outcomes. Peer victimisation acts as a risk factor, while peer support, positive school climate, and family involvement serve as protective factors. Socio-ecological theory accommodates the analysis of these factors simultaneously, offering insights into how certain environments mitigate the harmful effects of victimisation. Further, the theory was alignment with the study variables.

The three selected mitigating factors: peer, school, and family-related factors, and guidance and counselling services, were aligned directly with the microsystem and mesosystem levels of the theory. For instance, peer relationships represent direct interactions (microsystem). School policies and teacher involvement reflect both microsystem and mesosystem interactions.

1.11.2 Psycho-social Theory

The proponent of psycho-social theory was Erikson (1959). The theory argues that an individual's personality is influenced by society, and it develops through different phases created by psycho-social crises (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022. In each phase, an individual becomes competent, and in the case of the child, each stage must be handled adequately and if it is not, a feeling of misery will be created in the child's mind, thus affecting his ego, also known as ego quality. In addition, there will be a sense of inadequacy or personal inadequacies. Erikson further indicated that in each stage, psycho-social development contributes to a child's personality and psycho-social skills (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022).

The stages have been categorised according to the age bracket of an individual. The first stage is between birth to one and a half years. This stage involves the development of a feeling of trust and mistrust. The second stage falls between one and a half to three years. In this stage, the child develops feelings of autonomy, shame, and doubt. The third stage, between three and five years, involves an initiation or guilty behaviour. The fourth stage is when an individual is between six years to puberty, the stage is also referred to as the industrious or inferiority stage.

The fifth stage, also known as the confusion stage, is when the individual is ten to twenty years old, and it entails the development of an individual's social identity. The sixth stage, also known as the intimacy or isolation stage, occurs between the twenties and thirties. The seventh stage, known as the generatively or stagnation stage, takes place when the individual is between forty and fifty years, while the last stage, known as the integrity or despair stage, takes place when the individual is sixty and above years (Kesavelu et al., 2021).

The main focus of this study is on secondary school students who are aged between fourteen and nineteen years, and this falls under the fifth stage of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. This stage is mostly occupied by adolescents who are experiencing identity or role confusion. The theory fits this study because peer pressure is an important part of individual development. There is an increase in students' self-autonomy during the period of transiting from primary to secondary school. It is in this period that cases of peer victimisation become more detrimental than any other stage in life (Mansini, 2022).

Menesini and Salmivalli (2017) opine that adolescents are likely to be exposed to mixed feelings which they will need to adopt and adjust to the world where in some cases may

lead to role confusion. Henceforth, in the secondary school setting, the student's confusion and battle to adjust to the environment in most cases make the student encounter emotional problems which hinder them from focusing in their academics. Therefore, the students will depend on the support from their parents, teachers, peer counsellors and peers who will make them feel accepted and loved at school.

The weakness of psycho-social theory is that it assumes that students or a person always experience a conflict, which serves as a major turning point for their psycho-social development. Under this perception, the conflicts are based on developing psychological adjustment or failing to develop maladjustment (Sarah et al., 2016). Therefore, psychosocial theory was used to support the psychosocial adjustment variables of this study.

1.12 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework has been defined as a diagrammatic representation that illustrates the relationship between variables in a study (Luft et al., 2022). Adom et al. (2018) consider it as a roadmap that aids a researcher to examine a phenomenon by linking existing knowledge, research objectives and the presumed relationships among them. This study investigated the influence of selected peer victimisation mitigating factors on students' psychosocial adjustment. The relationship among the variables is depicted in Figure 1.1.

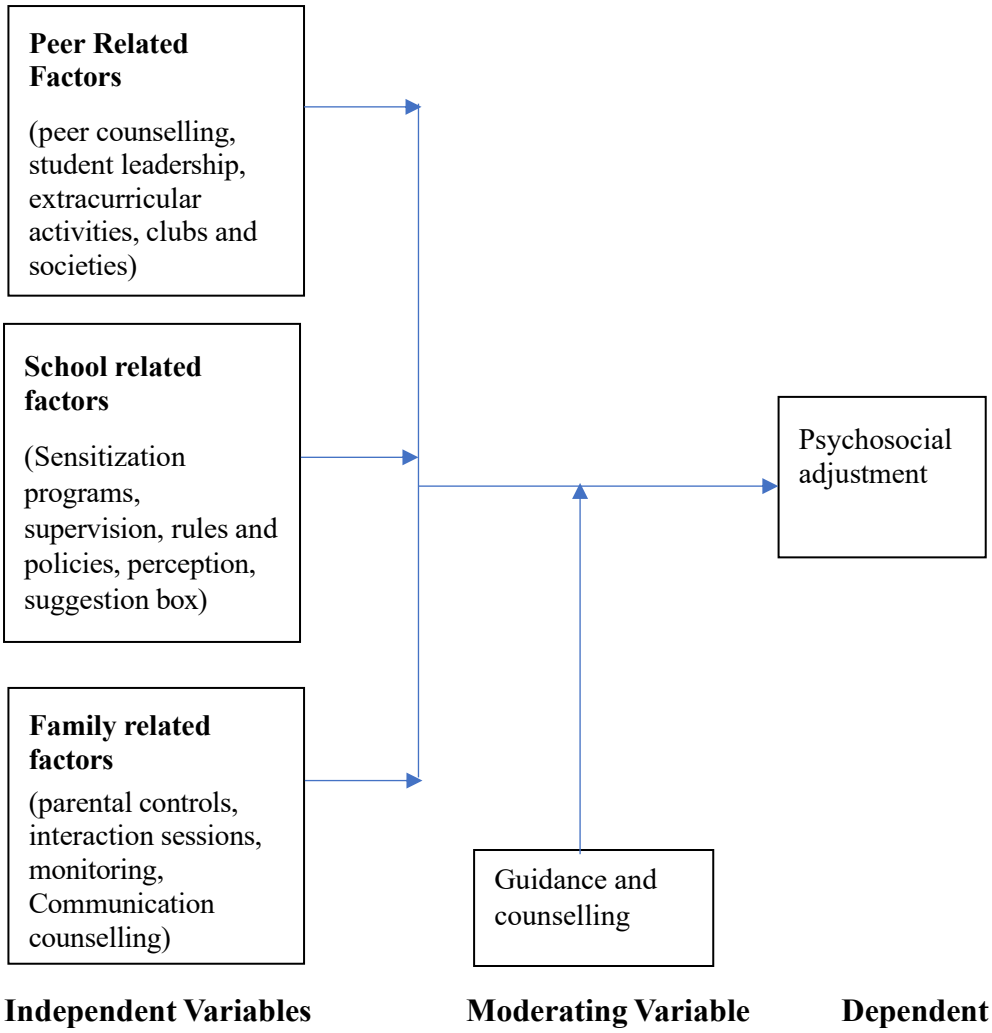

Figure 1.1: The Conceptual Framework showing the relationship among Variables

Figure 1.1: reveals that the independent variables were the selected per victimisation mitigating factors, namely, peer, school and family related. The figure also reveals that the dependent variable was psychosocial adjustment. The figure further reveals that guidance and counselling moderated the relationship between the selected factors and psychosocial adjustment.

1.13 Operational Definition of Terms

The following are the definitions of the key terms:

Family-related factors: In the context of mitigating peer victimisation, the term refers to the characteristics, conditions, and dynamics within the family environment that influence how a child experiences, responds to, or is protected from victimisation by peers (Piazuelo-Rodríguez et al., 2024). These factors shape a child's emotional resilience, social behaviour, and coping mechanisms, thereby affecting the likelihood and impact of being bullied or victimised.

Guidance and Counselling Guidance: These are services provided in schools to assist individuals to discover and develop their potential through information and support for making decisions about personal, educational, and vocational life (Bakesia & Abwalaba, 2023). Counselling is a more focused, therapeutic component of guidance that helps individuals deal with specific problems, emotional difficulties, and personal adjustments through a professional helping relationship. Together, they aim to promote a person's overall development, self-understanding, and social adjustment are processes that help individuals make decisions, solve problems, and understand and manage their emotions.

Peer-related factors: Refer to the characteristics, behaviours, and interactions among students that influence the likelihood, intensity, and outcomes of bullying or victimisation experiences (Piazuelo-Rodríguez et al., 2024). These factors determine how peers contribute to either the perpetuation or prevention of victimisation and how effectively they support victims or discourage aggressive behaviour within the peer group.

Peer Victimisation: It refers to the experience of being targeted by peers through repeated aggressive, harmful, or exclusionary behaviours intended to cause physical, emotional, or social harm (Ajibewa et al., 2025). It involves negative actions such as teasing, bullying, physical attacks, rumour-spreading, social exclusion, or cyber aggression perpetrated by one or more peers against another student who often has difficulty defending themselves.

Psychosocial Adjustment: Dong et al. (2024) define the term as the process by which learners effectively adapt to the social, emotional, and behavioural demands of school life, enabling them to function harmoniously within the academic and social environment. It encompasses how well students manage interpersonal relationships, regulate emotions, cope with stress, maintain self-esteem, and exhibit behaviours that support learning and positive peer interactions.

School-related factors: The term has been defined as policies, practices, environmental conditions, and social dynamics within the school setting that influence the occurrence, prevention, and management of bullying and victimisation among students (Mansini, 2022). These factors shape how safe, supportive, and inclusive the school environment is, thereby affecting students' vulnerability or resilience to peer victimisation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Literature review is a body of text that aims to review the critical points of current knowledge on particular topics. This chapter, therefore, gives an account of what has been studied on peer victimisation and psychosocial adjustment among students globally, regionally, and locally. It involved examining documents such as books, magazines, journals, and dissertations that have a bearing on the study conducted. The study looked at the influence of peer related factors on psychosocial adjustment, school related factors on psychosocial adjustments, family related factors on psychosocial adjustment and the influence of Guidance and Counselling on social adjustment of students in public secondary schools in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. The chapter was concluded by presenting a summary of the reviewed literature and the subsequent emerging knowledge gaps.

2.2 Concept of Peer Victimisation in Schools

Peer victimisation is a hostile behaviour, a momentous school stressor, and a social problem that negatively affects the victim's emotions, physical well-being, and mental health (Adejinmi, 2020). According to Vaillancourt (2018), peer victimisation can be based on two categories: indirect or direct. The indirect category can be through verbal, hostile behaviours, and physical experiences. It is worth noting that peer victimisation has been linked to aggressive behaviours with several outcomes in the adolescent age group. Bullying is considered a common form of violence in schools. According to several studies, bullying makes schools unsafe for students (Maliki et al., 2009).

Shahria et al. (2015) reported that bullying is a serious problem in academic settings worldwide and that it has a negative impact on academic performance. Other studies on

The effects of bullying in secondary schools show that bullying is regarded as a problem by education practitioners worldwide (Brown et al., 2008; Carney & Merell et al., 2010). The aforementioned research established that bullying is more common among female students than male students. Alison (2016) said that bullying is a global issue that affects the emotional, social, and physical well-being of school-age students worldwide. According to Shafqat (2015), bullying in schools takes place in restrooms, dorms, buses, and classrooms. Bullied students typically lose focus in class, which interferes with their academic performance because it makes them feel weak and afraid while also affecting their personality and self-confidence. As a result, they are unable to follow or pay attention to their studies, miss opportunities to interact with their peers, or even enjoy school activities.

Bullying or peer victimisation is also defined as intentional negative behaviour directed against a person (or persons) who has difficulty defending themselves and typically occurs with some repetitiveness (Olweus, 2013). Bullying can be further subdivided into direct bullying, such as overt aggressive acts, and indirect, which includes exclusion and cyberbullying (Hicks et al., 2016). It was once thought that physical bullying was the most common form of bullying, but it has now been recognised that verbal indirect forms of bullying can occur with even more frequency.

Increased indirect bullying can be even harder to detect with the advent of social media (DePaolis & Williford, 2015). However, in terms of overall negative effect on the person, students view indirect bullying as being as bad as physical aggression (Eslea, 2010). Half of all children are bullied at some time during their school years, with more than 10% reporting being bullied regularly (Bingham, 2010), and between 14% and 59% being bullied at least once (Klocke, Clair & Bradshaw, 2015). This is a global phenomenon, affecting children of both genders, with studies reporting on children

aged nine to seventeen (Layte & McCrory, 2009; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2014).

According to Minton (2010), 36% of post-primary students in Ireland had either been the victim of bullying or had been involved in bullying issues, which is an increase of nearly 10% since 1997 (see also O'Moore, 2010). It has been hypothesised that the rise in bullying reported in secondary schools is due to a lack of acceptance of diversity, as Juvonen and Graham (2014) noted an increase in bullying against children from minority groups, including LGBT children and obese children. Additionally, students who engage in bullying in schools are more likely to view the school environment negatively and as less safe (Rigby, 2017).

Tsaousis (2016) affirmed that continuous peer victimisation is a toxic stressor that chronically initiates the stress response system and the body's neuroendocrine that leads to the flow of events and outcomes, thus jeopardising the social, psychological, and physical well-being of a person. Therefore, high stress from peer victimisation in adolescence could influence the individual in many outcomes regarding their psychosocial and physical functioning and adjustments.

According to Espinoza et al. (2019), peer victimisation can also be referred to as targeted intimidation among the youths in schools, and this lowers feelings of class engagement, academic performance, and school connectedness. The relationship between peer victimisation and psychosocial adjustment emerges more across ethnic groups. Espinoza et al. (2019) established that Asian, White, Black, and Latino youths' school achievements were influenced by peer victimisation despite having controlled for family, school, and individual characteristics. Inuen and Ekott (2018) indicated that peer victimisation in the past only presented a physical act of aggression, for instance,

punching, slapping, and kicking. However, this was enhanced to include non-physical aspects such as name-calling, verbal threats, gender discrimination, rumour-mongering, and gossip, which tarnish the social reputation of the targeted victim. In general, peer victimisation involves both physical and verbal aspects, which will negatively affect the victim. These effects include school avoidance, low self-esteem, depression, suicide attempt, low school commitment, and poor academic performance.

The majority of experts concur that bullying, which is another name for peer victimisation, is characterised by recurrent instances of power imbalance between the aggressor and the victim, as well as the purpose to cause harm. The attacker and the victim engage in a dynamic relationship when bullying occurs. The victim loses power while the bully gains it. As a result, it is difficult for the victim to respond or to cope with the problem (Menesini et al. 2012; Hymel & Swerer, 2015).

Approximately 20–25% of young people are directly involved in bullying as offenders, victims, or both, according to a recent study by Juvonen and Graham (2014). According to extensive research done in Western nations, between 4 and 9 per cent of young people regularly participate in bullying activities, while between 9 and 25 per cent of school-age children experience bullying. There is also a smaller minority of young people known as bullies/victims who are both bullies and victims of bullying. With a total sample of 335,519 youth (12–18 years old), the authors of a recent meta-analysis on the prevalence of bullying and cyberbullying across contexts (Modecki et al., 2014) calculated a mean prevalence of 35% for traditional bullying (both perpetration and victimisation roles) and 15% for cyberbullying involvement. Cultural and contextual aspects of estimating prevalence.

In addition to scientific studies conducted in many nations, large-scale cross-national surveys conducted by NGOs, state governments, or other groups can provide data on prevalence. Smith et al. (2016) used four surveys for a global comparison on bullying and victimisation. The problem of countering bullying in schools has, in recent years, led to many suggestions on how it can best be addressed. The most widely used strategy is to enforce a "zero-tolerance" policy and make sure that anyone found to be bullying others, regardless of how serious the behaviour is, will face consequences. This makes sense given the public's rising worry over the prevalence of widely reported incidents of severe violence in certain schools, such as those that occurred after the Columbine tragedy. A zero-tolerance policy, particularly one that imposes severe penalties on those who behave in ways that could be interpreted as aggressive, is also widely believed to be the only way to curb the bullying culture in schools when there are no suitable alternative resources available to address the issue.

According to a comprehensive online poll carried out in the United States, more than 70% of educators and counsellors choose to use punishment when children engage in even minor bullying behaviour (Bauman et al. 2008). Similar results were obtained in Finland (Sairanen & Pfeffer, 2011) and Australia (Rigby & Bauman, 2007) using the identical survey instrument. The American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) examined this method and found it to be inadequate. However, according to a recent survey of school psychologists in the USA (N0205), 96.7% of participants stated that disciplinary measures, such as "i.e.(sic) suspension and expulsions for bullies," were used to address bullying cases at the schools where they worked (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010, p 222).

A little more than half (57%) of the school psychologists believed that the zero-tolerance policy didn't work (cite source). Unsurprisingly, psychologists are becoming

more interested in investigating alternatives to what may be referred to as the standard disciplinary strategy, which concentrates on inappropriate behaviours (Rigby 2010). According to a recent theory, the best way to understand bullying behaviour is to look at the wants or desires that lead certain kids to bully other kids (Jacobson 2007). Sittichai and Smith (2015) used two kinds of comparison data to analyse studies from ten ASEAN countries:

a. Articles presented by research academics
b. large-scale surveys (GSHS and TIMSS).

They concluded that there are significant language and cultural variations between eastern and western nations with regard to bullying types (social exclusion, extortion), where it occurs (classroom, playground), and who engages in it (strangers or classmates). Furthermore, definitions of bullying-like occurrences vary in language and could be impacted by cultural perceptions of what is acceptable. Notwithstanding these variations, they came to the conclusion that bullying-like acts are rather common across the ten nations, with prevalence rates that are comparable to those in Western nations (about 10%).

Much less study has been done in low- and middle-income countries on bullying and victimisation than in high-income Western and Eastern nations (Zych, Ortega, & Del Rey, 2015). Research from Latin America indicates that bullying is very common; 40–50% of teenagers in Colombia and Peru report bullying others (Oliveros, Figueroa, & Mayorga, 2009).

Data from an ongoing prospective study including a cohort of 12,000 youngsters (the Young Lives - YL) were used in a study by Lister et al. (2015) on victimisation among adolescents in Peru. The percentage of children who reported being bullied was 47.3%

at age 8, 30.4% at age 12, and 21.9% at age 15. According to two studies conducted in Nicaragua, 35% of secondary school students were involved, 124% were victims, 109% were bullies, and 117% were bully-victims (Del Rey & Ortega, 2008). Regarding Africa, 56.4% of South African students reported experiencing bullying, according to Greeff and Grobler (2008). A sample of 1452 schoolchildren, ages 8, 10, and 12, participated in another recent study conducted in Algeria (Tiliouine, 2015). According to the data, between 25 and 35 per cent of people were involved in bullying, both directly and indirectly. Although the results are not clear-cut, several studies indicate that bullying varies in frequency and manifestations among age groups. The effect size of age was 0.09 on bully role, 0.01 on bully/victim role, and -0.01 on victim role, according to Cook et al. (2010), who conducted a meta-analysis of 153 studies. This suggests that victim and bully-victim roles are generally stable over time, and that bullying behaviour slightly increases with age. According to Hymel and Swearer (2015), bullying tends to decline at the end of high school after peaking during the middle school years, which span 12 to 15 years.

Regarding bullying types, there seems to be a change from physical bullying to relational and indirect bullying as people become older (Rivers & Smith, 1994). Although some studies have revealed minimal differences, it is frequently believed that boys are more prone than girls to engage in bullying others (Pepler et al., 2008). Cook et al. (2010) found a correlation between gender (boys) and the victim role. 06, the bully/victim role of.10, and the bully role of.18 in their meta-analysis of 153 studies. This suggests that boys are more likely to play all three roles, though the gender difference for the victim role is not significant.

According to the majority of research, bullying among girls is more likely to be relational or verbal, whereas bullying among boys is more likely to involve physical

forms of victimisation (Besag, 2006; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Bullying due to prejudice, recent reviews have urged for more studies on discriminative, or so-called prejudice-related bullying (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). Not all student groups are equally vulnerable to bullying and victimisation; several studies show that students who are obese, have impairments, or are members of sexual or racial minorities are more likely to experience victimisation than their classmates.

According to Farmer et al. (2012), compared to their counterparts without impairments, female students who received special education services were 3.9 times more likely to be victims and 4.8 times more likely to be bully-victims. In the United States, Blake et al. (2012) discovered similar outcomes. One study looked at sixth-grade students' experiences of vulnerability at school, which is defined as feeling unsafe, lonely, and victimised. This study addressed the role of ethnicity in various contexts. The pupils came from ten middle schools with 99 different ethnically diverse classrooms (Juvonen et al, 2006).

A decreased perception of vulnerability among various ethnic groups was associated with greater ethnic variety. According to the authors, schools with a variety of ethnic groups may have more balanced power dynamics. A recent meta-analysis of Vitoroulis and Vaillancourt (2015) focused on ethnic group variations in peer victimisation and indicated that ethnic minority status alone was not highly related to a greater level of peer victimisation. Therefore, even if being a member of an ethnic minority increases the likelihood of victimisation, the impact varies depending on the situation. Numerous studies on the prevalence of homophobic bullying only use one-item assessments of sexual minority status and fail to account for aspects of sexual orientation, such as identity and behaviour.

The prevalence of sexual minorities is rather low, even in large population-based samples, and statistical analyses frequently lump various forms of sexual identities and preferences into a single group. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, some data are striking. For instance, a survey conducted by LGBT associations with over 7000 students between the ages of 13 and 21 revealed that almost 90% of LGBT students encounter harassment at school (Kosciw et al., 2012).

Furthermore, between 50 and 80 per cent of students who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender have reported experiencing homophobic teasing or name-calling (Espelage et al., 2015; Russell et al., 2014). In conclusion, bullying that stems from prejudice seems to be a very real issue that has a significant impact on minority populations. Risk elements Risk factors for bullying and victimisation at the individual level Bullies. In his groundbreaking work, Olweus (1978, p. 136) explained that bullies' "aggressive personality pattern" is what motivates their cruel actions.

Given that bullying is an aggressive action, it is not surprising that bullying is linked to a person's inclination towards aggression in general. Both general aggression and bullying are linked to aggressive attitudes and cognitions as well as low empathy for others (Van Noorden et al., 2016).

According to some theoretical explanations, bullies are people who struggle with social skills, low self-esteem, social information processing, low peer group status, and other adjustment issues. Bullying is seen by some as a useful, adaptive behaviour that has advantages (Bochere, 2018). Empirical studies have not always succeeded in clarifying this issue, partly due to the failure to acknowledge the heterogeneity of children and adolescents engaging in bullying. Bully-victims are people who have been bullied themselves, while "pure" bullies are people who have not been victimised. Compared

to bullies, bully-victims are usually quite maladjusted. To keep this distinction obvious, we describe bullies, victims, and bully-victims individually. It used to be widely accepted that bullying and other forms of aggressiveness are caused by low self-esteem.

Bullying is (weakly) associated with negative self-related cognitions, although these do not indicate a higher probability of becoming a pure, non-victimised bully (Cook et al., 2010). Numerous internalising issues, including anxiety, sadness, and low self-esteem, are linked to victimisation (Cook et al., 2010; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Numerous interpersonal issues, including having few or no friends, low acceptance from peers, and poor friendship quality, are also linked to victimisation (Cook et al., 2010; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Additionally, victims are more likely to be children who exhibit poor levels of prosocial behaviour and externalising difficulties (Card, 2003). Children who experience interpersonal challenges in addition to internalising (or externalising) problems are more prone to become victims (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Hodges & Perry, 1999).

The traits and objectives of bullies can be used to understand several risk factors for bullying, and children who lack confidence and assertiveness may encourage aggressive thoughts in future bullies. A child with these traits can also be a good target for someone looking to elevate their status. Bullies can show their dominance to the rest of the group without fear of conflict or losing the love of their peers by picking victims who are obedient, self-conscious (Salmivalli & Isaacs, 2005), physically frail, and shunned by their peers (Veenstra et al., 2010). The relationship between risk variables and victimisation is moderated by having protective friends. Therefore, compared to children who have friends who are strong and/or well-liked by others, shy and anxious kids are more likely to be victimised if they have friends who are physically weak and/or despised by their peers. Yet, although victimised children can benefit from

having friends who are strong and who can protect them from bullies, in reality, victimised children tend to hang out with other victimised peers (Sentse, Dijkstra, Salmivalli, & Cillessen, 2013).

Many children who are victimised by peers are also victimised in other contexts, including their home (poly-victimisation) (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007). On the other hand, victims see their family environment as being overly protective and pleasant, according to certain research. Lereya, Samara, and Wolke (2013) conducted a meta-analysis and discovered evidence of both abuse/neglect and overprotection within the family. While the latter was more firmly linked to the bully-victim status, the former was more strongly linked to being a pure victim.

A unique, albeit relatively tiny, subset of kids and teenagers are bully-victims. They exhibit both internalising and externalising issues and are heavily shunned by their peers. According to Cook et al. (2010) and Lereya et al. (2013), they frequently hail from the most unfavourable home settings, which are marked by abuse and careless parenting. In addition to having high reactive aggressiveness scores, bully-victims also have high proactive aggression scores. Additionally, their socio-cognitive profile differs from that of pure bullies (Toblin et al., 2005). Additionally, Poipoi (2011) notes that most secondary schools used it as a kind of required punishment exercise until the late 1970s. In 1999, four prefects were killed by a group of male students at Nyeri High School who locked them in their dormitories at night for tormenting them. About thirty per cent of bullying in Nairobi Province's public mixed-day secondary schools involved beatings, according to Ikambili (2003). Because bullying negatively impacts education, the Government of Kenya (GoK) took action to end it through school administration. However, student bullying continues even after it is prohibited. A 15-year-old Form

One student at a high school in Kiambu County's Lare region passed away in May 2006 from injuries sustained from a bully (Okwemba, 2007).

Later in 2008, Mathiu (2008) revealed that violence had occurred in over 254 secondary schools in Kenya, with Uasin Gishu County ranking among the top 10 with 54 incidents. Even though bullying is common in Kenyan schools, not much seems to have been done to stop it.

2.2.1 Psychosocial Adjustment

Psychosocial adjustment is the process by which an individual adapts to a particular environment and the individual develops sufficient mechanisms to integrate, feel good, respond accordingly to the environment's demands, thus attaining individual goals and objectives (Jiménez-Rodríguez et al. 2022). According to Brunsting et al. (2018), adjustment is the process that involves shaping and adapting to a new environment.

Troop-Gordon (2017) indicates that psychosocial adjustment is a process involving a student to maintain a balance between the circumstances that influence their satisfaction and personal needs. These needs can come in the form of ability of the student's ability to make satisfactory progress socially, academically, and emotionally, hence fitting in to the school's environment. On the other hand, Brunsting et al. (2018) state that adjustment is a method that one uses to deal with tensions, stress, and conflicts to meet their needs. In the process of adjusting, the person makes an effort to maintain a harmonious fit with the environment.

The psychological adjustment is the way in which the individual saturates his motives, as life is a set of Adjustment processes in which the individual modifies his behavior to respond to the renewed requirements and needs, so the Adjustment is closely related to the physical and sensory dimensions of the organism, while the concept of adjustment

is related to the psychological and social dimensions, that is what the person distinguishes himself to organize his life, and confront his problems and try to solve them (Beck, 2008).

According to Sunil (Snell, 2000), a teen's psychological adjustment is the result of constructive interactions with his surroundings and his capacity to continue using his talents in a way that is appropriate for the situation.

The social adjustment of the teenager, which results from his interaction with others, and his commitment to the ethics and the conduct of the society according to the rules and standards of society, the acceptance of social change, proper interaction with individuals, bearing social responsibility, and working with the group (Zahran, 2002). Social Adjustment is how the teenager understands his abilities and social skills and how to employ them in the composition of successful social relationships with others inside and outside the environment surrounding him, with his commitment to ethics and values of the community, and the participation in social events and interaction with others (Dewi & Agustin, & Satwika, 2017).

Psychosocial Adjustment is defined as the teenager's ability to respond appropriately to the situations and pressures he is exposed to in the surrounding environment. This indicates the extent of his ability to meet internal requirements (Rizvi, 2016). Psychosocial adjustment is a continuous dynamic process between the individual and himself, by finding positive methods and skills that achieve comfort and harmony with the environment. It helps build social relationships with the surrounding individuals in various social situations (Potrus, 2008).

As a result, psychosocial adjustment includes three social levels they are: first psychological dimension is when the individual saturates his needs and psychosocial

motives, the second social dimension is when the individual satisfies his needs within the standards set by the society in which they live, and the third dimension is the complementary between social and psychological dimensions as an interaction and integration between the psychological and social dimension.

Psychological accommodation is seen as a two-sided process that includes the individual's belonging to the social environment in general and the society in which he lives (Alsead, 2014). Numerous studies have focused on psychological and social harmony as well as happiness. A study conducted by Moshe (Lmoshi, 2019) sought to determine the degree of psychosocial adjustment of working children as well as the degree of gender differences in this adjustment among working children in the streets of Blida, Algeria. The study's findings indicated that working children had lower levels of psychosocial adjustment and that there were statistically significant disparities in psychosocial harmony, which were linked to the preference for males.

Students' psychosocial adjustment is seen as significant due to its favourable correlation with academic success (Stoynoff, 2012). Similarly, academic achievement and motivational factors were found to be highly associated by Steinmayr and Spinath (2009). Hill and Tyson (2009) made the case that families have a significant impact on pupils' learning in terms of social control. According to Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2007), learning in school is a social process that frequently involves cooperation with teachers and peers. Additionally, pupils study better in a safer school setting (Kutsyuruba, Klinger & Hussain, 2015). Academic success and self-regulation were found to be linearly related in a 2005 study by Duckworth and Seligman. A well-adjusted adolescent will have a problem-free social life.

The concept of adjustment refers to an individual's general adaptation to his environment and the demands of life, such as the way he relates to other people, that is, interpersonal behaviour, handles his responsibilities, deals with stress, and meets his own needs and life satisfaction (Hastings, 2007). In the process of adjustment, forces are balanced naturally within the system with forces originating from the environment. According to Hastings (2007), the process's short-term objectives can be broadly described as a form of balance with the system and in the system's interaction with the environment.

The ability to be oneself, cling to one's own, and force reality to adjust to one's needs and requirements is what adjusts a two-way process rather than a one-way one in which the individual complies with the obligations and requirements of others. It does not refer to a state of contentment or mental purity. The ability to correctly modify one's attitude and actions is a crucial component of adjustment because life is ever-changing. An educated person has an easier time adjusting to life.

A person must adapt to a number of challenges in life, including those related to education, social interactions, marriage, work experience, etc. One of the things that adolescents may need to adjust to is academic difficulties. Teenage years are a unique stage of life. This is a time of fast societal growth. Agubosi (2003) listed a few reasons why adolescents don't do well academically as a result of inefficient study techniques. According to the author, these include the following: poor note-taking, inability to develop arguments in a reasoned and coherent manner, lack of good expression in written work, inability to reason logically, rigidity of thought and poor study habits, lack of reading skills, unplanned and sporadic attempts to study, low productivity rate resulting in inability to complete work on time, and inability to cope with anxiety.

Teens who struggle in their social lives are more likely to do poorly and to be introverted, shy, and antisocial with their peers. Truancy and absenteeism from school are the ultimate outcomes of the aforementioned. Due to adjustment issues, adolescents with social problems might wish to go to school. Since the environment is always changing and adolescents are always growing and changing, psychologists' theories suggest that an emotionally healthy person has learnt to cope with both himself and his surroundings. Psychological effectiveness, or good mental health, is a continuous process rather than a static accomplishment. A person seems to be reasonably happy if their personal and social behaviours seem to be fairly well integrated. He or she may be able to cope with his or her surroundings more successfully if society accepts their behaviour. He or she may therefore be well-adjusted or psychologically sound.

Psycho-social adjustment has an impact on teenagers' academic achievement and group norms, according to Chen, Chang, and He (2003). According to Hughes (2005), a person's identity and actions in life can be influenced by their gender or cultural background. He further explained that it also affects adolescents' psycho-social development in positive and negative ways, and that cultural socialisation was associated with fewer behaviour problems in both genders. In a study that covered twelve developed nations, Ayayo (2007) found that both male and female students performed similarly well academically overall. The outcome showed that men were better than women.

The study of Shawaqfeh & Almahaireh (2019) aimed to reveal the level of both technological wellness and happiness and optimism among undergraduate students at the University of Jordan. The study results showed that students' happiness level was "moderate". There was a lack of statistically significant differences due to gender in the level of happiness. A study by Shammari (2017) aimed to study how we can predict

happiness through psychological security among teenage orphans in care and ordinary centres. The results of the study showed a significant statistical difference in (psychological happiness, self-independence, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, and psychological peace) depending on the situation variable. The differences were in favour of non-orphans, and also showed an existing effect of the predictive power of the psychological reassurance contribution to psychological happiness among orphaned and non-orphaned teenagers.

A similar study by Buczkym (2016) on the psychological happiness and its relationship with the life stressful events on university students, where the researcher used the psychological happiness scale and the scale of stressful life events, and the results showed an inverse relationship between mental happiness and stressful life events among university students.

Further, Makwana and Kaji (2014) posit that psychosocial adjustment is a psychological process involving adapting to new values and standards. The adjustment can be looked at from two perspectives: how well an individual deals with their conflicts to overcome the resulting tension. Adjustment can further be looked at as a process that involves how an individual fits into or compromises his or her conflicts. Therefore, adjustment fosters harmony and peace in school, home, or country.

The transition from the primary to the secondary level always comes with environmental, social, and academic changes that require the students to adjust to the new changes. Once students enter secondary schools, they get into new relationships that may have positive or negative outcomes. Positive outcomes of these relationships may include assisting each other in academic activities, socialisation, and motivation, while adverse outcomes include substance abuse and other anti-social behaviour such

as bullying. According to Sarah et al. (2016), students should adjust appropriately to the new environment.

Positive student adjustment may result in academic achievement and school retention. However, failure to adjust can cause the student to be less motivated, decrease academic performance, increase absenteeism, and resort to drug abuse, which may result in dropping out of school. Njoku (2021) established that most school adolescents are maladjusted; that is, most of them perform poorly in academics, have a high likelihood of dropping out of school, and have poor behaviour. In most cases, the maladjustment of students is associated with peer-related factors such as peer pressure and peer victimisation. Monitoring, intervening, and controlling factors that lead to a student's maladjustment in school could lead to social and psychological adjustment of the student.

Psychosocial adjustment is the combination of social and psychological factors on adolescents' mental and social well-being and their capability to adjust and fit in a learning institution (Obi 2016). Social factors comprise social relations, interpersonal relations, and social status, while psychological factors comprise self-image, optimism, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Psychosocial adjustment involves different indices, including depressed mood, social and academic competencies, and educational and students' family attainment of parents. Inuen and Ekott (2018) affirm that poor psychosocial adjustment of the student to the learning environment can cause the student to drop out of school, increase absenteeism develop health issues. Thus, counselling of the student and, therefore, school intervention through guidance and counselling is necessary.

In today's fast-changing world, people are required to adapt to their surroundings to manage the complexities of life. To keep up with these changes, individuals must modify their behaviour or environment. Without such adjustments, they risk being left behind socially. From birth to death, individuals must continuously adapt to fit within their environments (Dhillon, 2016). Success or failure, harmony or conflict, and satisfaction or dissatisfaction are all linked to how well one adjusts to life's challenges. A person unable to find appropriate ways to handle obstacles may experience anxiety, resistance, or a sense of failure. While some individuals accept their circumstances, others actively seek solutions to improve their situation. Ultimately, adaptation becomes essential to balance personal needs with environmental demands.

Schools play a vital role in fostering personal development and contributing to the well-being of society. For students to thrive personally and contribute meaningfully to society, they must receive an education that encourages them to adapt to their learning environment. A student's ability to adjust to school activities can be shaped by both the school environment and their experiences outside of school. Scholars have offered various definitions of adjustment. Kulshrestha (1979) and Raju and Rahamtulla (2007a) describe it as the process of creating a harmonious relationship between individuals and their environment. Adjustment is often used interchangeably with terms like accommodation and adaptation to achieve balance through these processes (Monroe, 1990).

Good (1959) defines adjustment as adopting behaviours suitable to one's environment, while Shaffer (1961) describes it as balancing one's needs with external circumstances. Kulshrestha (1979) emphasises that adjustment involves managing stress, tension, and conflict while meeting one's needs. Effective adjustment requires consideration of both

the individual and the environment. Individual factors include heredity, biology, psychology, and socialisation, while environmental factors relate to social settings.

When students leave their families to attend school, they face the challenge of adjusting to new surroundings. Success in school hinges on their ability to integrate into this environment. Generally, individuals must adjust across three primary areas: home, school, and society. Numerous studies have examined students' social, educational, health, and emotional adjustment, focusing on factors such as intelligence, socioeconomic status, anxiety, and security. However, research suggests that students' difficulties in adjusting to school life often go unaddressed, contributing to challenges like indiscipline.

Research has shown that the home environment and parental socio-economic status significantly affect students' academic success. Doley (2018) argues that children's cognitive development is shaped by the quality and quantity of stimulation they receive from their parents, as the home serves as the first site of learning. Various internal and external factors influence students' academic performance and self-confidence. Adolescence, a period marked by significant physical, emotional, and social changes, plays a critical role in shaping students' experiences. During this phase, adolescents may seek independence from their parents and prioritise friendships. These relationships influence their behaviour, sometimes leading to risky activities like substance use or other dangerous actions.

Adolescents frequently struggle with the pressures of their developmental stage, and many require support to navigate these challenges effectively. They need trusted individuals for guidance and emotional support, yet such help may not be readily available at home, as parents often face work commitments. Teachers, too, may be

unapproachable, leaving students to rely on peers or internalise their struggles. In the absence of adequate support, students may develop low self-esteem or even depression. Additionally, changes in family dynamics and societal structures make it harder for schools to engage parents in their children's education (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Teachers have noted that the traditional support parents once provided, such as ensuring students complete their homework, has diminished due to these changes.

Without proper guidance, students may resort to harmful behaviours, including substance abuse, unhealthy dieting, eating disorders, gang involvement, and unprotected sexual activity. These behaviours expose students to stress, anxiety, addiction, and depression, which negatively impact their academic performance and conduct. Unwanted pregnancies, school dropouts, and emotional challenges are becoming increasingly common outcomes of these risky behaviours.

Given these pressures, adolescents require assistance to adjust effectively to school life. Many students need mentors they can confide in, but with limited support from parents and teachers, they often turn to friends for help or struggle silently. This lack of support contributes to academic difficulties and emotional challenges. Schools are also finding it difficult to maintain regular communication with parents and keep them engaged in students' academic progress, further complicating the situation (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005).

As a result of these struggles, many students engage in risky behaviours, including substance abuse, violence, and occult practices. These behaviours increase their vulnerability to stress, anxiety, depression, and addiction, all of which can have severe consequences for their academic success and well-being. A deeper understanding of the

psychological and social factors influencing students' ability to adjust to school is essential for improving their academic experiences and overall quality of life.

2.2.2 Peer-Related Factors and Psychosocial Adjustment

Students' psychosocial adjustment in school is largely influenced by the students' perception of social acceptance or rejection by their peers. The level of classroom integration determines the level of the student's performance in school, both in terms of academic outcomes and extracurricular activities. (Sentse et al., 2017). Moreno et al. (2020) argued that a perceived lack of social acceptance of a student from their friends can make them develop a traumatic experience associated with a negative assessment of their life and can cause emotional distress.

Further, Esposito et al. (2019) indicated that a student lacking social acceptance from peers might lead to external problems such as anger, hostility, and a high level of anxiety. Poor integration of students in the classroom has been found to cause the development of antisocial behaviours, including bullying and violence in schools. A study to assess the relationship between school integration, psychosocial adjustment, and aggression among adolescents by Moreno et al. (2020) found a significant positive relationship between life satisfaction, sociometric type, and aggression among adolescents.

The study investigated the relationship between rejection, preference, neglect, life satisfaction, and psychological discomfort based on adolescents in Spain. The study found that snubbed students in school revealed less satisfaction with life and aggressiveness. In addition, regardless of the boys' social metric type in the class, they exhibited lower psychological distress than girls. They also revealed less involvement

in bullying or aggressiveness. However, adolescents who had controversial behaviour displayed high involvement in bullying and cyber-aggressiveness.

While covert bullying refers to subtle yet aggressive, disguised, non-physical behaviour that is concealed from educators, parents, and other adults, traditional bullying refers to more readily observed overt behaviour, such as being kicked, struck, or having personal belongings stolen or destroyed (UNESCO, 2019). Peer interactions, for instance, can be exploited to damage victims by ignoring them, socially excluding them, or spreading false rumours in an effort to undermine their sense of acceptability and belonging (Cross et al., 2009).

Research indicates that the frequency of bullying is a key factor affecting adolescent mental health. Adolescents who are frequently bullied are more likely to experience severe depression, and some victims may even become perpetrators, bullying their peers or others. Recently, studies have also begun to examine how different forms of bullying influence adolescent mental health. It has been found that the type of bullying is a crucial factor as well. Early research focused on identifying which forms of bullying had the most profound impact on mental health, but findings have varied across countries and regions.

For example, 1,302 people participated in a survey by Maunder et al. (2010), which included staff, teachers, and students from four secondary schools in England. According to their findings, students were most harmed by physical bullying. Chen et al. (2012) surveyed middle school students in Taiwan, China, using two samples: 605 and 869 students. They discovered that relational bullying—which includes spreading rumours and cyberbullying—had a greater effect than verbal or physical bullying. Data from 10,273 secondary school students in Victoria, Australia, from the inaugural

adolescent health survey, which was carried out in 2009, were examined by Thomas et al. (2016). Of the four types of bullying (name-calling, rumours, neglect, and physical bullying), they found that neglect had the largest correlation with mental health.

According to a major cross-sectional survey conducted by Baier et al. (2018), which involved 10,638 ninth-grade students in a German federal state, psychological cyberbullying had the biggest effect on the mental health of both boys and girls. Peer or teacher relationship bullying was also important, and sexual cyberbullying had an especially negative impact on girls' mental health. It's interesting to note that this study did not find that physical bullying significantly impacted mental health.

The second area of inquiry looks into how different types of bullying affect adolescents' mental health, depending on their gender. For instance, Turner et al. (2013) studied 1,874 middle and high school students in North Carolina to investigate the effects of verbal, physical, and cyberbullying on mental health, including depression and suicidal thoughts. According to their research, women experienced higher degrees of depression after cyberbullying than men did, but there was no appreciable difference in either gender's intention to terminate their lives following bullying of any kind. Shongwei et al. (2021) used data from the 2013 Eswatini Global School-based Student Health Survey to investigate gender differences in the impact of bullying on mental health among 2,920 children aged 15 to 17. They found that both boys and girls who were bullied experienced loneliness and feared becoming victims again. Similarly, using data from the 2015 U.S. Youth Risk Behaviour Surveillance System, Kim et al. (2019) found that school bullying had a more negative psychological impact on girls than on boys.

In their study of a sample of 7,182 American teenagers in grades 6 through 10 from the 2005 Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey, Wang et al. (2009) found that

girls were more likely to experience relational bullying than boys were to experience verbal or physical bullying. Yen et al. (2014) discovered that middle school students were more negatively impacted by bullying in terms of their mental health than high school students, although there hasn't been much research looking at how bullying affects different age groups.

Compared to overt bullying, covert bullying is just as harmful to the mind (Baldry, 2004; Ferraz-de-Camargo & Rice, 2020), and it can occasionally leave social and psychological scars that last into adulthood (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Prinstein et al., 2001).

An investigation on the effects of psychosocial variables on first-year students in campus adjustment in Delta State, Nigeria, by Obumse and Egenti (2021) found that peer pressure had a highly significant effect on social adjustment on campus. The main focus of the study was to evaluate the influence of peer pressure on students' self-efficacy. Peer pressure had a greater influence on the student's social adjustment in school. Thus, the study recommended that parents and teachers in learning institutions should observe changes in adolescents' behaviour to manage the effects of destructive peer group pressure on social adjustment.

Da Silva et al. (2020) examined the bidirectional relationship between bullying perpetration and internalising among the youth. The main objective of the study was to document the patterns of behaviour exhibited by bully victims and develop interventions for the prevention of peer victimisation. Through a cross-sectional study involving 13,200 youths aged between 12 and 17 years, they found out that the majority of the youth suffered long-term mental challenges after being victimised by their peers. However, exposure of the perpetrators and subsequent intervention to prevent bullying

significantly reduced the psychological effect caused to the victims. Internalising problems if not controlled or prevented through appropriate mechanisms can lead to an increased probability of bullying others.

In order to determine the impact of peers on form one pupils' transition to secondary school, Sarah et al. (2016) conducted a study in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The study design employed was an explanatory survey. The study focused on 14,043 first-graders in Uasin Gishu County, 207 school administrators, and 207 counsellors. The results showed that peers had a significant impact on form one students' adjustment, confirming that a friendly and encouraging social environment had a good impact on students' adjustment and retention in school.

The significance of peer support is heavily emphasised, with the role of other school stakeholders being entirely ignored. According to the study, a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere aids in kids' adjustment and raises their school retention rate. This study examined the impact of peer victimisation on the psychological adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County, whereas the previous study concentrated on the adjustment of form one students in secondary school in Uasin Gishu County. According to the current study, students' school adjustment and, in turn, their academic success depend heavily on the psychological support of their peers, teachers, significant others, and the entire school environment.

2.2.3 Family-Related Factors and Students' Psychosocial Adjustment

Family-related factors present the interaction that occurs between parents and children. The parents can either be biological parents or step-parents who live with the children under one roof (Kay et al., 2019). Sanders and Turner (2018) hold that parents should support and help children to grow and become physically, mentally, psychologically,

morally, and socially upright. Further, children brought up in an intact family with strong unity lead to proper reasoning, interacting well with peers in the learning institution, behaving well and working tirelessly to achieve academic goals.

Parents typically believe that their life experience may offer the best protection for their children, and children are expected to heed their parents' wishes and follow the rules. Their children will always require their parents' care and assistance since they will never grow up (Ma & Fan, 2021; Qiang, 2011).

Family factors, according to research on bullying, are very important in the development of the personalities of children who bully or are victims of others. The attitudes and behaviours of families greatly affect the behaviour of children in social life. Any negative attitude between either of the parents and the child, excessive punishment, physical discipline / inconsistent and loose control, using socially acceptable physical attack, negative relationship between the parents and the child, and the nature of the child are very important elements in terms of bullying (Kanık, 2010). Moreover, overprotective behaviours of parents and their dependence on the family make the child a potential victim of bullying. The opposite of this, which is to free the child, not to show love and attention, lack of empathy, domestic violence and conflicts, increases the likelihood of bullying (Gökler, 2009).

According to Rahul (2013: 2014), a family is a collection of individuals who are related by marriage, birth, or consanguinity and who regularly share a kitchen and financial resources. Regarding this, Bansi (2014) lists five main family types: nuclear, single-parent, extended, step, or reconstructed, and grandparent households, which in certain cultures continue to play a significant role in family life (Bansi, 2014). Every family

structure has its own set of family dynamics that affect individuals' growth, beliefs, and behaviours, as well as how they relate to one another.

Members of the family will have been impacted by the dynamics they encountered in their early years, even in cases where there has been little interaction within the family. Family dynamics affect people's mental health, relationships, and interactions with the outside world, as well as how they view themselves in later life (Miles, 2015). Family transitions are the main change that affects how a family develops. There are two types of family transitions: normative and non-normative. Biological, psychological, or social norms dictate normative transitions, which are anticipated and predictable.

According to statistics, non-normative transitions are more uncommon and frequently unanticipated (Corvan & Corvan, 2015). They occur when a parent initiates or ends a romantic relationship; this might include getting married, getting separated, getting divorced, living together, or starting or ending a dating relationship (Kristin et al., 2015). Children's psychological development is thought to be threatened by family changes (Goodnight et al., 2013). They are linked to worse academic performance (Sun & Li, 2011; 2014), more behavioural issues (Magnuson & Berger, 2009), and worse social and emotional development (Lee & Mclahanahan, 2015).

Family transitions have an impact on children throughout their lives and are linked to early family formation, lower income, decreased mobility, a higher chance of high school dropout, a lower chance of completing university, and more (Bloome, 2017; Hampden- Thomson & Galindo, 2015). Parents play a vital role in the emotional growth of children. They help them define who they are as human beings and influence how each adapts to societal norms. The home is the first place the children discover the importance of values and what it means to belong. From childhood, youth are

conditioned to believe that the family is comprised of a mother, father, and children (Encyclopedia Britannica online, 2017). Common non–normative transitions include parents' separation/divorce. Access to resources, low attachment (Gahler & Pammtag, 2015), income, ownership of marital property, unequal property sharing in the event of a separation or divorce, having a large family, poor parenting, and a lack of conflict resolution skills are some of the major factors influencing intra-family constellations in Kenya (Njenga, 2016).

A family environment is composed of a family unit of a mother, father, children, and other members residing within the same house and interacting freely among themselves (Kurt, 2022). Alam (2017) argues that the family environment strongly influences children's behavioural and cognitive development. In other words, the family environment is considered to be the quantity and quality of emotional, social, and mental support available at home. An adolescent's social adjustment is linked to his school and home relationships. It is asserted that a student living in a well-integrated home helps control the attitude and behaviour wholesomely in school life.

It has been observed that social adjustment and parenting style are related (Garcia et al., 2020; Kazemi et al., 2012). In-depth studies on the role of families in peer victimisation and psychosocial adjustment among Kenyan adolescents attending public secondary schools are still lacking, nevertheless. According to Shraddha & Surila (2015), there is fierce competition in today's world to establish a strong position and then to fight to keep it.

In a study by Ozcinar (2006), it was revealed that the family serves as the primary socialisation unit and is, therefore, a key influence on a child's development. As society becomes more materialistic and modernised, adolescents face increasing challenges in

adjustment compared to previous generations. Parenting plays a crucial role in a child's emotional security and attachment, as parents who are attentive to their child's needs for safety and care foster secure bonds (Bowlby, 1988). Parenting literature suggests that by combining warmth (acceptance) and control, four parenting styles can be identified, each associated with distinct developmental outcomes for children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). These parenting styles, categorised by levels of demandingness and responsiveness, include: Indulgent (Permissive), Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Uninvolved (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Each style reflects a balance of parental responsiveness and demandingness, leading to varied impacts on child development.

Indulgent Parents are more responsive than demanding, often lenient and allow considerable self-regulation. They avoid enforcing mature behaviour and rarely confront their children (Baumrind, 1991). Indulgent parents can be further divided into democratic, who are lenient but engaged, and non-directive, who allow more freedom. Permissive parents, for example, let their children regulate their activities and make life decisions without much parental guidance (Baumrind, 1966; Hickman et al., 2000).

Authoritarian Parents, on the other hand, are highly demanding but not responsive. They enforce strict rules and expect obedience without question. These parents value control and authority, shaping their children's behaviour according to strict standards, often through punitive measures (Baumrind, 1991). Obedience is expected without explanation. Authoritative Parents balance demandingness with responsiveness. They set clear expectations but encourage open discussion and reasoning as children grow older. Authoritative parents guide their children's actions with support and communication, fostering both assertiveness and social responsibility (Baumrind, 1996).

During adolescence, this period of significant transition brings changes in family and social roles, increasing the complexity of relationships (Buhrmester & Wndol, 1987; Selman, 1980). Adolescence marks a shift from dependence on parents to independent relationships with peers and intimate partners. Adjustment, often synonymous with accommodation and adaptation, refers to how individuals manage stress, tension, and conflict, striving to maintain harmonious relationships with their environment (Kulshrestha, 1979). Various factors contribute to adjustment challenges among at-risk children. For example, Baker and Heller (1996) found that childhood behavioural disorders were linked to family stress and maladjustment. Higher externalising behaviours in children were associated with negative family impacts and more authoritarian parenting practices.

Early childhood adjustment is often shaped more by parental characteristics and the family environment than by external factors. Dagmar and Ellis (2000) studied the relationship between parenting styles and socio-emotional adjustment in elementary school children, finding that authoritative parenting was associated with fewer maladaptive behaviours and more positive adjustment indicators. Goran and Kerstin (2007) examined parent-adolescent conflicts in Swedish adolescents, finding that authoritative conflict resolution (based on mutual respect) was linked to better adjustment, whereas authoritarian and indulgent conflict patterns were associated with lower psychosocial adjustment.

Several studies (LeDoux et al., 1998; Leslie, 2004) have highlighted the relationship between family environment factors—such as cohesion, expressiveness, organisation, and conflict—and adjustment. Solomon and Marjorie (2002) found that mothers who were both demanding and responsive had children with higher adjustment levels, while

factors like a mother's commitment to family cohesion also contributed to better outcomes. Lee et al. (2006) identified distinct parenting patterns that differentially influenced adolescents' behaviour and adjustment, linking family interactions to academic achievement and self-concept development. The behaviours and dynamics within the family play a vital role in shaping an individual's adjustment and behaviour patterns (O'Leary, 1995).

Accordingly, self-esteem can be derived from possessing intellect, riches, a nice home, a fancy car, and a prominent position (Melgosa, 2010). According to Ulrich and Robins' (2014) research, self-centred motivation is demonstrated by the holding of principles and valued beliefs as well as a desire to assist others. According to empirical research, adults who have higher self-esteem have less anxiety (Nima et al., 2014).

According to Bornstein and Bornstein's (2014) research, children who experience authoritative parenting where parents strike a balance between being demanding and responsive have better social skills. According to Wu et al. (2016), children and adolescents who have poor self-esteem are more likely to participate in dangerous behaviours like drug use or delinquency, as well as to develop several serious mental health issues or express suicidal thoughts.

Success and well-being in areas of life like relationships, employment, and health are prospectively predicted by high self-esteem (Ulrich & Robins, 2014). All children can grow up to be emotionally stable, well-adjusted adults with a healthy sense of self-worth if their growth process is successful (Liv-Berit, 2017). Compared to body dissatisfaction, self-esteem is more closely linked to physical appearance-related characteristics (Dion et al., 2015).

Peers and family members are two aspects of the social environment that have a significant impact on how teenagers develop their sense of self, which is closely linked to their body image. Clinically evaluated teenagers with high self-esteem experience fewer symptoms of anxiety/depression and attention issues over time, according to a study by Ingvild (2017). This suggests that self-esteem serves as a resilience factor against these symptoms. Adolescent self-worth is increased by positive parent-child connections (MacAdams et al., 2016). Additionally, active students exhibit higher levels of task orientation and self-esteem, while inactive students exhibit lower levels of ego orientation and self-esteem (Ahmed, 2017).

Kurt (2022) sought to determine how individual dynamics influenced students' psychosocial adjustment in middle schools in Turkey. The study found that family support affected academic achievement on psychosocial adjustment. The family environment was used as a mediating factor. The study concluded that family support played a more significant role in enhancing psychosocial adjustment than gender. The study used family support as a mediating factor, while this study used the family environment as one of the independent variables.

Alam (2017) carried out a study on the effects of family on adolescent adjustment in India. The study focused on joint families and nuclear families. From the observation, it was revealed that joint families and nuclear families had significant differences in emotional adjustment. The other observation was that adolescents from joint and nuclear families significantly differed in social adjustment. And lastly, it was revealed that adolescents from joint and nuclear families had significant differences in educational adjustment.

The study concluded that a joint family setting had a stronger influence on adolescent adjustment than a nuclear family. This was because the joint family had more adults advising the adolescents and positively adjusted. The study focused on the joint and nuclear family, while this study focused on the family environment in general. The study also focused on adolescent adjustment as a dependent variable, while on the other hand, this study focused on the psychosocial adjustment of the student.

Cutrín et al. (2018) carried out a study to assess the longitudinal effects of parenting practices on non-violent and violent antisocial behaviour and drug use among adolescents in Spain: a moderating role of deviant peers was used to examine change in the behaviour of 663 adolescents drawn from 13 public secondary schools from Galicia (Spain) aged between 12 and 15 years.

The influence of parenting model (parental support and parental knowledge) on deviant peers and the source model (parental solicitation, adolescent disclosure and parental control) on peer deviancy was assessed. The findings of the study established that low levels of parental knowledge, peer monitoring led to high levels of peer deviance among adolescents and thus an increase in problematic behaviours such as bullying and drug abuse. High Parental support, enhanced awareness of the adolescents led to increased social, psychological adjustment and non-violent behaviour.

Davis et al. (2020) sought to examine the relationship between exposure of adolescents to parental and community violence and its relationship with perpetration of bullying and peer victimisation among early adolescents in the United States of America. Specifically, the study examined how the adolescents' exposure was linked to depression, impulsivity, delinquency and school belonging. The study adopted a

parallel process growth mixture latent transition technique to examine the trajectory profiles of the 1,611 youths from Midwestern schools that were used in the study.

The findings showed that the majority of the adolescents (63.7%) from increasing community violence and decreasing parental violence transitioned to a high victimisation and high bullying class. Therefore, exposure of early youth to any form of violence at home from parents and from the community increases the youth's aggressiveness and victimisation experiences in school. However, victimisation can be prevented by identifying students with those characteristics.

In terms of familial influence, bullies report poorer family cohesion than other kids (Smith, 2014) and typically view their parents as authoritarian, harsh, and unsupportive (Baldry & Farrington, 2000). Cook et al. (2010) conducted a meta-analysis and found that, on average, family characteristics had a poor relationship with bullying. However, they looked at several family factors combined rather than independently, including parental conflict, monitoring, and family SES.

Njoku (2021) sought to determine the effect of family structure on psychosocial adjustment in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study focused mainly on single-parent and step-parent families and how they influenced the students' psychosocial adjustment in secondary school. It was observed that there was a significant influence of family structure on the psychosocial adjustment of students in secondary schools in Ebonyi. The findings could not be generalised to represent the findings of family environment because the data were only obtained from single-parent and step-parent families. Therefore, this study addressed the gap by focusing on the family environment at large. Kay, Runo and Muola (2019) conducted a study to examine the impact of family constellations on the psychosocial adjustment of

university students in Nakuru County, Kenya. Specifically, the study focused on self-efficacy, self-esteem, social skills development, pro-social behaviour and emotional intelligence of regular university students. The result indicated that self-efficacy and self-esteem had statistically significant differences across the different family setups. The study used undergraduate students, whereas this study used secondary school students.

2.2.4 School-Related Factors and Psychosocial Adjustment

Secondary school pupils in Kenya, particularly those starting form one, struggle to strike a balance between their personal demands and how these requirements are met in the classroom. Both psychological and social factors are important in any social setting, such as school, in order to achieve desirable attitudes, good relationships and proper self-understanding that will enhance students' adjustment to the new environment. School is an institution that provides the individual with social responsibilities, self-control and respect for other individuals, as well as education and training. Every child and young person has the right to access to education in a safe school environment (Leach, 2005). However, children / young people can be deprived of these rights due to many reasons, and unwanted behaviours defined as bullying in schools can be encountered. Research indicates that bullying, one of the most significant issues facing schools, has become more widespread and is impeding their ability to function as safe establishments (Gökler, 2009; Hoşgörür & Orhan, 2017).

Bullying is characterised as the systematic use of aggression by an individual to injure someone he perceives to be weaker (Olweus, 2013). While some scholars define bullying as intentional aggression directed at others, others contend that aggressive behaviour must be repeated regularly to be considered bullying. As a result, the researchers have not fully agreed upon the definition (Yaman et al., 2011). Bullying is

defined as "intentional, repeated, negative (unpleasant or hurtful) behaviour by one or more persons directed against a person who has difficulty defending himself or herself" by Olweus (1993), who also provided the term that is most frequently used.

Students at all educational levels are susceptible to bullying. According to Ashley and Foshee (2005) and Özdinçer et al. (2009), it is more prevalent in early adolescent (13–15 years) children who reject family authority, share their problems, feelings, fears, and concerns with peer groups, spend the majority of their school time with their friends, and believe that social status and acceptance are crucial in the group. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported in September 2018 that bullying occurs in and around schools for half of the world's 150 million students between the ages of 13 and 15.

The literature indicates that bullying behaviours vary between boys and girls (Perkins & Montford, 2005) and that children who experience domestic violence are more likely to be bullied themselves (Grinberg et al., 2005). Girls are less likely than boys to be bullied by or bully others in school, although boys tend to engage in direct bullying-type behaviours while girls mostly employ indirect bullying techniques (Gültan, 2019). Bullying at school has detrimental psychological impacts that both bullies and victims will experience for the rest of their lives. Adolescent trauma will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on a person's life (UNICEF, 2018).

Bullying in school has been shown to have a detrimental impact on children's physical and mental health by lowering attendance and encouraging absenteeism. Bullying is a syndrome in schools because its effects extend beyond school life and can have detrimental effects, including suicide (Yaman et al, 2011). Bullying is a hot topic that organisations, particularly the "Ministry of Education" and the media, focus on because

of the rise in bullying incidents in our nation's schools in recent years and the cases that result in death. According to a study by Yelboğa and Koçak (2019), bullying can be physical, emotional, social, or psychological, and it is not impulsive or unplanned but rather deliberate, methodical, and planned. Although there are more boys than girls who are bullied, victims of bullying are equally distributed between the sexes. Girls, as a collective, exclude the victim they chose, but boys are frequently motivated by personal abilities. The percentage of people who reported being bullied declined steadily between the ages of 8 and 16, while the percentage of people who reported being bullied did not decline.

Physical bullying gives way to relational and indirect bullying as people get older. The victim and the bullying student are typically in the same age range or class. The bully is stronger than the victim, and, unusually, a younger classmate will bully you. A child or group may engage in bullying. It may be continuous and long-term or sporadic and short-term. The majority do not talk about bullying with their teachers or family members because they see themselves as victims. Being a victim is a more serious issue in older age groups, as seen by the rising percentage of people who do not come forward. Girls can be bullied by both sexes, but guys are bullied by other boys. Bullying typically occurs in public spaces like playgrounds, classrooms, or hallways. Bullying events are caused by a variety of school-related issues, but socioeconomic circumstances, particularly in service regions, are found to have a significant influence. Since the 1970s, school bullying has been researched in a wide range of nations and cultures because it is an issue that affects everyone.

On the other side, bullying at school refers to the deliberate, voluntary, and persistent physical targeting of the weaker classmate (kick, slap, push, pull, etc.). 2) to verbally abuse, insult, ridicule, chastise, chastise, and degrade 3) to spread rumours, gossip, and

threaten to take money or other belongings from less powerful students. This kind of aggression leaves the victims alone and separates them from their friends, causing discomfort where the victim is powerless to defend herself (Gültan, 2019; Özdinçer et al., 2009; Yelboğa & Koçak, 2019).

According to Kolek et al. (2007) and Sülükçü and Altunkaya (2018), bullying in schools can be broadly defined as physical, verbal, and psychological attacks or intimidation in an environment that is physically and psychologically unequal and that is committed by the strong intentionally, voluntarily, and systematically at regular intervals against the weaker peer without the element of incitement with the intention of causing the victim to feel afraid, anxious, or harmed. In fact, bullying has existed since the beginning of time (Olweus and Mona, 2003). In the 1970s, Norwegian researcher Dan Olweus conducted the first studies on bullying in schools. Later, he participated in commissions to develop anti-bullying initiatives in Norway and other Scandinavian nations (Berger, 2007; Hughes, 2005).

A study by Sourander et al. (2020) revealed that the incidence of physical, emotional, and verbal violence was significantly higher among male students, with rates being 8.1, 2.6, and 3.1 times more frequent, respectively, compared to female students ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, the likelihood of engaging in physical, emotional, and verbal violence increased with age ($p < 0.001$). Specifically, when comparing students aged 14 to those aged 17, the older group exhibited nearly a 2.2-fold increase in physical violence ($p = 0.01$), a 1.6-fold increase in emotional violence ($p = 0.01$), and almost a 2-fold increase in verbal violence ($p = 0.007$).

A correlation was found between lower family educational levels and instances of verbal, physical, and emotional aggression. Students whose parents were employed

were also more likely to engage in physical bullying. In one study, 5% (n = 305) of students reported carrying cutting instruments, such as pocket knives, with the intent to bully. Among those who used physical violence, 8% (n = 253) of boys and 2.2% (n = 52) of girls carried such instruments for bullying purposes ($p < 0.001$).

A survey of 500 children revealed that 31.4% had experienced bullying. The incidence was 18% in all-girls schools and 38.2% in coeducational schools. Bullying prevalence increased with age and grade level, primarily manifesting as verbal violence, including nicknaming, abusive language, rumours, insults, and social isolation. Physical harm was reported at a rate of 16%. Students exhibited signs of distress such as wanting to be left alone, damaged clothing, school phobia, vomiting, and sleep disorders.

Headaches were frequently reported as a primary symptom among both boys and girls subjected to bullying. Statistically significant correlations were found between different types of physical, emotional, and verbal bullying and both gender and age of the students. Male students were at a higher risk of being victims of physical, emotional, and verbal bullying, with increases of nearly 2-fold, 1.4-fold, and 2-fold, respectively ($p < 0.001$). One study indicated that physical and verbal victimisation decreases with age ($p < 0.05$). A lower degree of physical victimisation was noted among students whose mothers were graduates of lycée (36.3%) or university (38.8%). Students with parents who have lower educational levels are more likely to be victims of bullying.

In a study group where male students had a mean age of 13, they made up 50% of the population, which included 40% in primary education, 26% in secondary education, and 34% in higher education (cite source). These students experienced violence at least once over the course of a year, a rate three times higher than found in other studies. Male students were more frequently involved in bullying behaviours overall. In higher

education, male students showed a higher prevalence of bullying behaviours, while in primary and secondary education, there was no significant difference between genders. The frequency of bullying behaviours decreased as students progressed to higher grades. Additionally, bullying was more commonly observed in families with separated parents or where two biological parents were absent.

After the 1990s, this topic, which had previously only been studied in Scandinavia, began to garner attention in nations like the USA, England, and the Netherlands (Uludağlı & Uçonak, 2005; Yıldırım, 2012). Heinemann (1973), the first researcher to study bullying, used "group violence" to describe bullying in schools and said that the group's response was centred on protecting the group from a deviant group or individual (Yaman et al, 2011). According to Berger's (2007) evaluation of research findings on bullying, 289 studies were published in databases only in PsycINFO over ten years between 1990 and 2000, while 562 studies were published over four years between 2000 and 2004.

Olweus (1994) distinguished three types of bullying, despite the fact that there are various typologies: verbal bullying, physical bullying, and social exclusion. Social exclusion is regarded as indirect bullying, but the latter two are treated as direct bullying because they are observable (Smith & Ananiadou, 2003; Smith, 2004). While open attacks like pushing, hitting, teasing, threatening, and damaging a peer's belongings are examples of direct bullying, exclusion from the social group, gossip, embarrassment, or cyberbullying are examples of indirect bullying that do not require the victim and bully to come into direct contact (Li, 2006).

Indirect bullying frequently occurs both on and off school grounds, while direct bullying occurs in the classroom or in the schoolyard. According to reports, girls are

more likely to experience indirect bullying, while male students are more likely to experience direct bullying (Berger, 2007; Hughes, 2005; Pepler et al, 2006; Rigby and Johnson, 2005). Typical Features of Bullying at School According to studies, bullying at school varies by nation and culture (Gültan, 2019; Hoşgörür & Orhan, 2017; Lee, 2004; Sullivan et al., 2004).

Although bullying among young people can occur in any setting, it typically occurs at school or on the way to and from school. Young people involved in bullying are at risk of poor school functioning, as measured by attitudes toward school, academic performance and absenteeism (Nashina et al., 2005). They may suffer significant psychological distress (Salmon et al., 1998; Arseneault et al., 2006) and, in rare instances, take their own life (Marr et al., 2001). Young people with serious psychosocial problems might experience problems associated with attention, behaviour, and emotional regulation, which interfere with their ability to learn (Nashina et al., 2005).

Although it is more common among boys and girls in elementary schools, bullying at school seems to be a complicated issue that peaks in its most severe manifestations around puberty. According to the most recent UNESCO data from 2019, 32% of pupils say they have experienced bullying from their peers at school at least once in the previous month. According to Olweus (2007), bullying is the persistent misuse of authority among peers, characterised by aggressive verbal, physical, and psychological actions by perpetrators against their helpless victims.

Therefore, it is a very immoral phenomenon that jeopardises the welfare of people who are affected by it (Ortega-Ruiz, 2020). Bullying's abusive dynamics frequently start as a dispute in which the aggressor rapidly establishes an unequal power and control over

the victim. The social environment in the classroom plays a significant role in how this phenomenon starts, ends, or worsens, as well as the resulting level of victimisation experienced by the victimised student. More precisely, the set of explicit and implicit guidelines that students use to determine what conduct is appropriate in interpersonal relationships (Saarento et al., 2015).

Literature reveals that students have been evaluated on both individual and contextual factors, such as their social skills or conflict-resolution abilities, as well as openly stated bullying norms (Gaffney et al., 2021). Nonetheless, challenging circumstances have a significant impact on how bullying dynamics have changed throughout time. Few studies have examined how these two characteristics interact to affect bullying dynamics and, most intriguingly, the involvement of defensive and aggressive behaviour (Huitsing et al., 2019). The prevalence of bullying varies throughout student classrooms and entire schools.

Peer group dynamics, instructor traits, and demographic factors (such as class size) can all be used to identify risk factors at the classroom level. Differences in bullying at the classroom level do not appear to be adequately explained by demographic characteristics. For example, there is no concrete proof that the number of bullies or victims in a class is correlated with its size. When an association has been discovered, it frequently goes against what is typically expected: bullying is more prevalent in smaller classrooms as opposed to larger ones.

Several additional demographic options have either produced contentious results or failed to adequately explain disparities between classes (such as the percentage of males or immigrants in a school). Peer group dynamics or teacher attributes are better suited to explain classroom variations (Saarento et al., 2015). Bullying behaviour is linked to

classroom hierarchy: bullying is more common in highly hierarchical classrooms where authority (who usually makes decisions) and peer status (like popularity) are concentrated in a small number of people rather than being dispersed equally.

A study by Garandeau et al. (2014), bullying eventually rises as a result of classroom hierarchy rather than the other way around. On the other side, bullying cannot thrive in a non-hierarchical classroom setting. Additionally, the reasons why children in particular classrooms are more likely to engage in bullying can be explained by classroom norms. Low levels of antibullying attitudes, positive expectations about the social consequences of pro-bullying behaviour, and negative expectations about the social consequences of victim behaviour are all indicators of pro-bullying norms, and they are all linked to students' increased likelihood of engaging in bullying in the classroom (Nocentini et al., 2013).

When students observe bullying occurring, their actions might also be a reflection of the norms in the classroom. Peer responses to bullying situations have significant effects on the development and continuation of bullying because they give the bullies immediate feedback. It is suggested that bullying is socially rewarded since bullying is more likely to occur in classrooms where supporting the victims of bullying is uncommon and encouraging the bullies' behaviour is widespread (Salmivalli et al., 2011). From the perspective of students who are vulnerable to bullying, recent studies have demonstrated that the relationship between victimisation and individual risk factors (like social anxiety and peer rejection) differs between classrooms, indicating that victimisation is more likely to occur when the classroom environment permits it.

Classrooms with high levels of reinforcement of the bully and low levels of victim defence by peer bystanders increase the risk that vulnerable children may become the

targets of bullying (Kärnä et al., 2010). Lastly, the degree of bullying issues in a classroom is correlated with students' opinions of teachers' attitudes towards bullying. A study that looked at the mediators of the KiVa antibullying program (Saarento et al., 2015) discovered that the program's effects on bullying were mediated by changes in students' evaluations of their teachers' attitudes towards bullying. Students' bullying behaviour decreased throughout the year that the KiVa program was put into place because they began to believe that their teachers disapproved of bullying. This demonstrates how important it is for educators to let pupils know that they disapprove of bullying.

Bullying can have detrimental effects on bystanders' health in addition to the health of bullies and victims (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Numerous longitudinal studies conducted in various nations, as well as systematic reviews and meta-analyses, have shown a connection between bullying at school or experiencing victimisation and subsequent health consequences. Even after adjusting for additional risk variables associated with childhood, these relationships remain (Arseneault et al., 2010).

Researchers have worked hard over the last three decades to examine how bullying and victimisation affect people's physical, mental, social, and overall welfare. The key findings indicate that compared to their peers who are not victims, adolescents who experience bullying miss more school and exhibit symptoms of poor academic performance (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009), report higher levels of loneliness and worse health (Fekkes et al., 2006), and experience higher levels of anxiety and depression (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). The intensity of the victimisation experience has an impact on these adverse consequences as well. According to research by Van der Plog, Steglich, Salmivalli, and Veenstra (2015), victims who experienced multiple or frequent bullying, as well as those who were bullied by several people, suffered more

than victims whose experiences were less frequent or committed by fewer peers. Reijntjes et al. (2010) examined the connection between bullying and internalising issues.

They came to the conclusion that these issues seem to be both causes and effects of peer victimisation, creating a "vicious cycle" that raises the stability of peer victimisation. Additionally, research has connected suicidal thoughts to victimisation (Holt et al., 2015; Klomek,2015). Being bullied is linked to serious mental health symptoms in the short term, as noted by Arseneault et al. (2010) in their review. It also has long-term consequences that may endure until late adolescence. A study by McDougall and Vaillancourt (2015) emphasised the need for a multifaceted and intricate model to comprehend the direct and indirect connections between experiences of peer victimisation and subsequent adult outcomes.

Lastly, Wolke and Lereya (2015) validated the severe repercussions of bullying above and beyond other environmental and personal factors by examining research on genetically identical monozygotic twins who lived in the same homes but were discordant for bullying experiences. Active bullying has a significant effect on people's personal lives as well. Ttofi et al. (2011b) found that bullying perpetration is a strong and specific risk factor for subsequent criminal offending and psychotic symptoms after conducting a meta-analysis of 28 longitudinal studies. This trend was validated by Klomek et al. (2015), who also suggested a dosage effect, according to which adult adversities are more strongly linked to childhood bullying involvement. The same authors concluded that whereas victimisation is associated with a higher risk of depression, bullying perpetration is associated with a higher chance of delinquency.

Even after adjusting for many other significant childhood risks, victimisation is a significant childhood risk factor that uniquely contributes to later depression (Ttofi et al., 2011a). Bully-victims, victims, and bullies had a significantly higher risk for psychosomatic problems than non-involved age-mates (Gini & Pozzoli, 2015). To prevent early criminality, suicide, internalising symptoms, and other psychological issues, the authors of the studies mentioned stressed the significance of implementing successful anti-bullying programs with a high benefit-cost ratio. Many authors suggested that these kinds of activities ought to be considered a type of public health early intervention. Initiatives that work.

Antibullying initiatives have been the subject of much research, with several school-based programs having undergone scientific evaluation. Such programs are frequently successful, according to Farrington and Ttofi's (2009) meta-analysis, which found an average reduction of 20–23% in bullying others and 17–20% in being bullied. According to Langford et al. (2015) and Ttofi and Farrington (2011), the effects are less pronounced when programs are assessed using stricter designs, like randomised controlled trials, and they also differ significantly amongst programs. It should be mentioned that certain programs have no good results, have never been studied, or have been evaluated so inadequately that no conclusions about their impact can be made.

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never been studied, or have been evaluated so inadequately that no conclusions about their impact can be made.

A program may achieve its best results when all of its components are employed together, but it is also possible that some components are in charge of the positive results while others have little to no impact. The cost-effectiveness of interventions must be evaluated from the standpoint of public health. Ttofi and Farrington (2011) looked into what makes bullying prevention programs effective. Based on an evaluation conducted across programs, they came to the conclusion that the success of programs is correlated with their duration (in days or months) and intensity (in hours). This implies that in order to achieve the intended results, programs must be extensive and long-lasting.

The authors also found that disciplinary procedures (i.e., sanctions within a warm context) and parent training/parent meetings were associated with program effectiveness. The secret to success is the mobilisation of bystanders, or the silence of the majority when bullying is occurring. According to research, peer witnesses' reactions have a critical role in either preventing or promoting bullying. Furthermore, rather than encouraging the behaviour of the bullies, some of the most successful programs, like the Finnish-developed KiVa antibullying program, focus on raising bystanders' awareness, empathy, and self-efficacy to support their victimised peers (Kärnä et al., 2011).

Despite the fact that Ttofi and Farrington's (2011) analysis did not find that adding the element "work with peers" strengthened the effects of antibullying programs, their coding work with peers defined it as "formal engagement of peers in tackling bullying" (including the use of formally assigned peer mediators, or peer supporters), as opposed to educating students about the role of all peers and creating guidelines for bystander

intervention in classrooms. Both theoretically and empirically, the latter kind of approach is strongly advised (Salmivalli, 2010). Current research indicates that formal peer helpers who intervene in bullying have minimal impact on persistent bullying. However, it should be mentioned that a study by Palladino et al. (2015) indicated that bullying among teenagers can be decreased by designating peers as educators and integrating them in awareness-raising.

The way that preventative programs are implemented varies from school to school and from teacher to teacher. Depending on the resources and dedication in the schools, even programs that were intended to be intensive can be conducted more or less intensively. Additionally, teachers may modify some important aspects of the programs; in other words, they may choose not to administer the program as intended. There is proof that more implementation fidelity is linked to better results, such as a larger decrease in students' bullying experiences (Haataja et al., 2014).

In conclusion, school-wide initiatives to stop bullying are frequently effective. However, the results of these programs differ; some consistently have beneficial impacts, while others show little to no evidence of success. How can the diverging effects be explained? Programs must be comprehensive, duration-oriented, and faithfully carried out. Both the employment of disciplinary measures against bullies and the involvement of parents appear to increase the consequences. Improving antibullying norms and behaviours in classrooms is essential, as is educating kids about the role of the entire group in perpetuating bullying.

Additionally, educators must make their antibullying stances known to their students. A school's anti-bullying policy is mandated by law in a number of nations. In conclusion, school-wide initiatives to stop bullying are frequently effective. However,

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Additionally, educators must make their antibullying stances known to their students. A school's anti-bullying policy is mandated by law in a number of nations. According to earlier research, bullying is a collective phenomenon in which participants adopt various roles based on their level of involvement, with the victim and aggressor roles serving as the primary protagonists. Even while schoolchildren are aware that abuse and mistreatment are common social occurrences, there is always a noticeable difference in how they perceive these events and the various social roles they play when faced with difficulties.

Some schoolchildren assist the victim in some way; others stay silent and, by doing so, give their consent; still others quietly leave (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Salmivalli, 2010). Still others support the aggressor by encouraging them to continue their behaviour or by applauding and demonstrating their approval of the situation. As a more true description of this school issue, the terms victim, aggressor, spectator, defender, aggressor, or reinforcer allude to the part that each child performs in this phenomenon of interpersonal violence (Zych et al., 2020).

Because of their divergent impacts on the development and upkeep of these classroom dynamics, aggressors and defenders are the most important actors among the several

roles involved in bullying (Pouwels et al., 2018). In addition to having a dominant position within the classroom's hierarchical structure, albeit a less favourable one on an affective level, the aggressors are typically schoolchildren who exhibit socially dominant impulses and a proactive attitude towards the use of violence (Romera et al., 2019; Wiertsema et al., 2023; Zych et al., 2019).

Defenders are typically schoolchildren who attempt to assist the victim of bullying by offering protection and comfort, seeking assistance from an adult, or assertively addressing the bully (Ma et al., 2019). Bullying is less common because of the social role these schoolchildren perform, which is a fundamental part of the socio-ecological context in which they are integrated (Espelage & Swearer, 2009; Laursen & Veenstra, 2021). There are significant signs that the unique features of the classroom group and of group subsystems, like the implicit norms of the peer group, play a crucial role, even though individual, motivational, and social differences are factors that subtly affect the dynamics of abuse (Benner & Crosnoe, 2022; Garandeau et al., 2019; Laninga-Wijnen & Veenstra, 2021; Pouwels & Garandeau, 2021).

Implicitly held beliefs are formed by a set of rules that govern group members' behaviour and have the power to either facilitate or alter abusive dynamics. The majority of the group accepts these implicit norms, and members frequently work hard to adhere to them in an effort to gain the social acceptability that these young people so desperately need (Laninga-Wijnen et al., 2018; Rambaran et al., 2013). When judging and assessing bullying episodes, implicit norms are also very important because they serve as a guide for what behaviour is considered acceptable and is rewarded, valued, or socially acceptable (Forsberg et al., 2018; Laninga-Wijnen & Veenstra, 2021; Ma et al., 2019).

Adolescents who engage in bullying dynamics within a group form opinions about the kinds of behaviours that will be accepted and encouraged by their peers, just like they do with other behaviours. In this regard, groups that accept and/or value abuse, humiliation, or injury to others have been reported to have higher levels of bullying than groups that support pro-social behaviour (Berger & Caravita, 2016; Romera et al., 2019).

According to earlier research, bullying is more common in classrooms where the observers only act as witnesses, whereas in classrooms where the bystanders offer support to the victims or voice their disapproval of unfairly aggressive behaviour, the aggressors have a less sympathetic audience and are less likely to repeat their actions (Garandeau et al., 2019; Gini et al., 2011; Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). Because aggressive or defensive behaviour is accepted in some peer groups while it is discouraged in others, we must investigate how implicit norms impact and interact with bullying, a complicated social issue.

The most significant individual traits that can influence and explain defensive and aggressive behaviour are those that dictate the nature of social interactions among schoolchildren, such as pro-social behaviour, social adjustment, and normative adjustment (Carmona-Rajas et al., 2023). In order to promote school climate, normative adjustment entails cultivating behaviours and attitudes of tolerance and respect for the explicit norms set in the school setting (Herrera-López et al., 2017).

The degree to which an individual acquires socially acceptable behaviour that enables their behaviour to blend in with their local social surroundings is known as psychosocial adjustment (Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2017; Vaughn et al., 2009). Previous studies have acknowledged the significance of social and normative adjustment in bullying

participation (Romera et al., 2022a; Romera et al., 2022b), demonstrating a negative correlation between social and normative adjustment levels and aggression.

Nevertheless, little study have been done on this link with respect to protective behaviour. Less than half of teenagers who observe bullying take a defensive stance, despite the fact that most students acknowledge bullying as an unethical activity in which the victims should be protected (Pouwels et al., 2019; van der Ploeg et al., 2017). Furthermore, a new study indicates that if the behaviour is not accepted by the peer group's implicit norms, protecting the victim may have detrimental social repercussions (Pouwels et al., 2020). A person who practices pro-social conduct develops strategic, voluntary behaviour that benefits others (Eisenberg et al., 2006). This psychosocial skill involves the person becoming interested in other people's issues to assist them and offer socially acceptable solutions (García-Fernández et al., 2022). Low levels of pro-sociality have been linked in the past to aggressive behaviour in bullying situations (Zych et al., 2018). The social and moral elements that shape teenage behaviour, such as the emotional support kids receive in the classroom, actually have an impact on pro-social behaviour, which changes with age (Dereli, 2019).

According to García-Fernández et al. (2022), when defenders against bullying assist and encourage the victim, they may also become the target of aggression. But it has also been discovered that bullies can dominate material and social resources by employing pro-social tactics (Roberts et al., 2020). Significant variations have been found in the impacts of age and gender.

According to recent cross-cultural research and meta-analyses, boys are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour (Smith et al., 2019) and girls in defensive behaviour (Ma et al., 2019). However, as adolescents age, their involvement in both types of

behaviours tends to decline (Cho & Lee, 2020). Generally speaking, boys are less likely than girls to exhibit social and normative adjustment (Bjärehed et al., 2020; Jiménez & Estévez, 2017; Longobardi et al., 2018), but pro-social skills are the contrary (Roberts et al., 2020). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that prosocial abilities and social and normative adjustment decline throughout adolescence and then resurface in the latter stages of the transition to adulthood (Carlo & Padilla-Walker, 2020; Jiménez & Estévez, 2017).

Bullying and victimisation may happen early in life, but longitudinal studies show that the impacts can last a lifetime (cite sources). This is because there is mounting evidence linking the experience of bullying to mental health issues later in life (Bond et al., 2001). A study conducted in the United States of America also revealed that the attackers in over two-thirds of 37 mass school shootings felt "persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured by others," and that revenge was an underlying motive. Longitudinal studies also show that the propensity to bully at school significantly predicts subsequent antisocial and violent behaviour (Rigby, 2003).

General practitioners play a crucial role in the assessment and management of young people affected by bullying. As a result, many students may experience severe social and psychological imbalances that may impact their relationships with others and, ultimately, their ability to achieve their life goals. Poor academic performance is a major contributor to the student's stress level and leads to the fear of failure and expulsion; depression can cause absenteeism and desperate sentiments, which interfere with healthy study habits, and further reduce academic performance; and learners who do not receive the necessary psychosocial support and adequate social skills to enable them relate to others may develop aggressive behaviour and poor adjustment, leading them to consistently exhibit behavioural patterns associated with low levels of adjustment,

such as low self- competence and hesitancy to participate in school activities, among other behaviours, and may eventually drop out of school (Rob & Callahan, 2011).

The whole-school approach is currently being used in efforts to reduce the mental health effects linked to bullying victimisation. This method adopts a socio-ecological viewpoint in which families, school communities, and governments collaborate to carry out anti-bullying and educational initiatives (Cross et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2014). Reducing bullying behaviour is a good thing, but it might not be enough to help specific victims. In order to reduce bullying behaviour and victimisation, for instance, a systematic and meta-analytic review that examined the effectiveness of programs focused on 12 countries in three regions (North America, Europe, and Scandinavia) found 65 distinct school-based bullying intervention and prevention programs (Gaffney et al., 2019).

Importantly, most of these programs had not been evaluated and implemented more than once using separate samples. According to Gaffney et al. (2019), just four out of the sixty-five programs had undergone more than two evaluations, with different evaluators and in different locations. When taking into account all four programs, the whole school strategy was modestly successful, reducing victimisation and perpetration by roughly 15–16% and 19–20%, respectively, indicating that both issues are still common. The findings, however, indicate that the whole-school strategy isn't always the best and may not work for every youngster.

The KiVa program, for instance, was "marginally effective" at reducing victimisation by 11%, whereas the ViSC program's impact sizes were not statistically significant, but the odds ratios indicated a 4% rise in victimisation. The country, region, or cultural context, as well as the place and population for which the program was first created, are

some of the contributing elements that make determining these differences in efficacy challenging (Gaffney et al., 2019).

A learner's ability to get excellent learning outcomes and accomplish their objectives can be increased by their social and psychological adjustment to the educational environment. Students who have not adapted well to the school environment are more likely to display or develop anti-social behaviours, according to Onyekuru (2020). Goals, conventions, interpersonal relationships, values, teaching and learning methods, and the structure of the school are all reflected in the school environment, claims Yao (2021).

In addition, Bear et al. (2018) noted that a positive school climate fosters positive student development, a low suspension rate, a low victimisation rate, an improvement in academic performance, and better mental health. In fact, the effectiveness of the whole-school approach is frequently questioned, with researchers concluding that programs vary from somewhat effective to not at all, and in some circumstances to increased victimisation and exclusion (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). Gaffney et al. (2019) concluded that the whole-school approach may not be the best strategy to combat bullying perpetration and victimisation and that targeted interventions are required to help individual children.

Calls have been made for high-quality assessments to demonstrate cost-effectiveness and identify the elements of the whole-school anti-bullying strategy that decrease victimisation and perpetration (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007).

Surprisingly, the Australian National Safe Schools Framework was implemented as a national initiative without any longitudinal empirical evaluation of the program's

effectiveness, reflecting the lack of evidence supporting anti-bullying programs and the whole school approach (Cross et al., 2011). Notably, it has been proposed that the eager acceptance of the whole-school strategy and its incorporation into national law in many nations stems from a pressing need to act rather than conclusive proof of its efficacy (Smith et al., 2004).

Yao (2021) conducted a study to assess the relationship between school environment, peer victimisation, peer preference, and middle-level school students in China. The school environment was used as a moderator between peer victimisation and adjustments. The school environment was measured using the relationship between teacher and student, expectation clarity, and respect for diversity. From the regression analysis, teacher-student expectation clarity and respect for diversity had no significant teacher-student adjustment difficulties. This was assumed that the school environment was only one among many dimensions that could contribute to adjustment difficulties. The study focused on middle-level school students in China, while this study used public secondary schools in Kenya.

Based on the social ecological theory, DeWit et al. (2012) examined the influence of school culture on behavioural problems of adolescents. These included willingness to perform activities and self-esteem, using peer approval of deviance as a mediating variable. The Favorableness of school culture was measured by the perceived fairness of school rules and regulations, student autonomy in decision making in the school, support received from other students and teachers in the school, student conflict and resolution mechanisms.

It was established that perceived unfavourable school culture led to low student attachment to learning and other activities (Bochere, 2018). Further, an unfavourable

culture was also found to have a significant relationship with the students' disciplinary problems, substance abuse, hyperactivity, defiant disorder, conduct disorder and low self-esteem. The study indicated that the favorability of the school environment is a continuum where a positive perception of a favourable learning environment motivates the students to associate well with others.

Akanni and Oduaran (2018) carried out another research investigating the mediating roles of academic self-efficacy and academic adjustment among Nigerian university students. A sample of 621 beginning students was involved in this study who reported their academic self-efficacy, academic adjustment, social support and life satisfaction. Results revealed that social support networks from family and faculty members enhanced students' academic adjustment and consequent satisfaction in school life. Social support encompasses social integration as well as actual and perceived availability of social support experienced by the students.

Although the findings of this study report a positive and significant relationship between psychosocial support and students' academic achievement, the current study was still necessary since it used a different sample, 362 form one students in Kenya. Similar results were obtained by Lephoto and Hlalele (2021) in their study carried out among students in Lesotho. The study aimed at exploring teachers' perspectives on the position of guidance and counselling as a core component for school-based psychosocial support. The sample comprised 18 teachers. The results revealed that psychosocial support is important in the lives of students, although it focused more on material needs. To address the issues that contribute to the complex social challenges that negatively impact students and life in school life in general similar other factors must be put into consideration to ensure students' issues are met in their entirety. The

current study, therefore, went beyond the provision of support based on material needs to address students' social and psychological needs.

Onyekurub (2020) investigated schools' role in students' social adjustments in Emohua local government secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study indicated that students must adjust to social and school settings to foster their academic performance. The correlational results established that school settings had a strong, negative and significant influence on social adjustment. The study concluded that teachers must help students to have proper social adjustment. The study looked at social adjustment, and the current study focused on psychosocial adjustment.

The concerns that students have when they transfer from a smaller to a larger school, as well as how the abrupt changes in size, location, and their own role within a large organisation can impact their identities as learners, have been highlighted by earlier research, such as Wang'eri et al. (2012). Secondary school pupils in Kenya, particularly those starting form one, struggle to strike a balance between their personal demands and how these requirements are met in the classroom. Both psychological and social factors are important in any social setting, such as school, in order to achieve desirable attitudes, good relationships and proper self-understanding that will enhance students' adjustment to the new environment.

Previous research, for example, Wang'eri et al. (2012), has brought to light the anxieties that students experience as they move from a smaller to a bigger school, and how the sudden differences in space, size, and their own position within a large organisation can affect their identities as learners. Those who build secure relationships have fewer problem behaviours and exhibit high levels of self-esteem, form positive self-concept,

exhibit leadership, and engage in prosocial skills. Support from peers and significant others in the school may play significant roles in helping them to adjust to the school.

Unfortunately, many of these students are inadequately prepared for the realities of secondary school and the demands for adjusting to the academic system, daily tasks, as well as developing a new array of social relationships with classmates, teachers, and other significant members of the school community may be quite overwhelming (Ndung'u 2023). Those who build secure relationships have fewer problem behaviours and exhibit high levels of self-esteem, form positive self-concept, exhibit leadership, and engage in prosocial skills. Support from peers and significant others in the school may play significant roles in helping them to adjust to the school. Unfortunately, many of these students are inadequately prepared for the realities of secondary school and the demands for adjusting to the academic system, daily tasks, as well as developing a new array of social relationships with classmates, teachers, and other significant members of the school community, may be quite overwhelming. As a result, many students may develop severe social and psychological imbalances that may affect their interactions with others and subsequently the achievement of their life goals. Learners who do not experience the necessary psychosocial support and adequate social skills to enable them to relate with others may develop aggressive behaviour and poor adjustment, leading them to consistently exhibit behavioural patterns associated with low levels of adjustment, such as low self-competence and hesitance to participate in school activities, among others, and may eventually drop out of school.

Grew et al. (2022) examined the mediating role of school engagement on the relationship between peer victimisation experiences and teacher support in secondary school, predicting university enrollment five years later in the UK. The main focus of the study was to assess the extent to which peer victimisation and support received from

teachers influenced the aspiration of the student to enrol on the university five years later through school interventions. The study also examined whether the aspiration effects were moderated by ethnicity. A sample of 15,110 students was used for the study, where 51% were male and 49% female.

The students were grouped into four groups: junior secondary (T1-T3), aged 13 to 15 and senior secondary (T4), who are 16 years and above. Data analysis was done using Structural Equation Modelling with the aid of Mplus 8. The outcome indicated that students at lower secondary were subjected to more peer victimisation as compared to those at higher grades. Peer victimised students had lower aspirations to enrol on university, but after Teacher support and school engagement, their aspirations increased. This implies that teacher support and school engagement had a positive influence on the students' psychosocial adjustment.

Several studies carried out have revealed that the perceived quality of the school environment is linked to school adjustment. Sarah et al. (2016), for example, affirm that a supportive and warm social environment enhances adjustment and retention in secondary school.

Lack of quality perceived support from teachers, families and peers all contribute to students' poor adjustment to the school. On the contrary, students who experience high levels of support from teachers, family and peers are more resilient and can cope with the detrimental effects of moving from primary to secondary school with ease.

Kyalo and Chumba (2011) have similarly reported poor school adjustment. They contend that as students adjust to the school environment, they face a wide range of difficulties. One of the ongoing issues plaguing Kenya's education system is students' inability to adapt to the classroom setting.

2.2.5 Role of Guidance and Counseling on students' Psychosocial Adjustment

The concept of guidance and counselling refers to the cultural intervention between trained and untrained personnel. In a school setting, this represents a relationship between the teacher, counsellor and student. (ALSaleem, 2022). According to Kanus (2022), over the last decade, guidance and counselling practice has increased in schools due to multiple issues affecting students' learning institutions. The students encounter some challenges in school life, but don't have enough capacity to evaluate the cause of those challenges and the means of addressing them. Therefore, there is a need to have a department equipped with trained personnel to help address challenges facing students as well as minimise inter- and intra-conflicts.

Psychosocial problems have led many nations to introduce school guidance and counselling in their education systems to help students harmonise their learning pursuits with their well-being. The difference between guidance and counselling is that guidance services are aimed at helping students' whole-person development, while counselling is targeted at helping students with problems. In other words, although counselling is more supportive and remedial in character, guidance is preventive and developmental (Lai-Yeung, 2014).

Onijigin (2020) noted that guidance and counselling service has an important role in preventing physical, emotional, academic and social difficulties among students. ALSaleem (2022) examined the influence of guidance and counselling on the psychosocial adjustment of secondary school teenage girls in Al-Noor. The findings established that guidance and counselling helped teenage girls overcome anti-social behaviours. This contributed to girls harmonising their individual needs and motives. Further, the study revealed that guidance and counselling significantly influenced students' psychosocial adjustment. On this note, the study recommended that schools

emphasise guidance and counselling programs. The study targeted teenage girls, while this study focused on secondary school girls and boys.

Khan (2020) examined the effect of counselling on underachievers' social adjustment. The study focused on the students who underperformed in their academic results. The counselling process was conducted for 42 days before the assessment. The study findings indicated that counselling had a positive and significant effect on the underachiever's social adjustment. In their study to determine the reasons behind student strikes in Murang'a County, Kenya, Gikungu et al. (2013) found that indiscipline was the primary cause, which was demonstrated by behaviours including bullying, truancy, peer pressure, gang membership, apathy, and school dropout, among others. The report suggested, among other things, improved guidance and counselling programs, peer counselling, mentorship programs, a more welcoming school climate, and better student monitoring. In research conducted in Murang'a County, the Kenya National Adolescents and Youth Survey (2015) found that poverty, peer pressure, parental influence, and the availability of drugs and substance abuse were the main causes of the educational difficulties faced by pupils.

Fatigue of students due to too much workload was also highlighted. The consequences of these problems result in poor adjustment and performance, and in some cases, students dropping out of school. However, identifying every potential cause that hinders the school adjustment process and subsequently creating preventive measures to help youngsters adjust to school is crucial.

In Nigeria, the statistics have indicated that most students face peer victimisation, leading to emotional, physical and academic difficulties. In order to overcome these challenges, schools need to embrace the concept of guidance and counselling. Onijigin

(2020) sought to determine the influence of counselling on the behavioural adjustment of students from public secondary schools in Nigeria. It was established that the concept of counselling in most schools was low, and there were no efforts from the relevant authority to embrace the service.

The findings also indicated that counselling was influenced by social, emotional and physical adjustments. However, counselling had an insignificant influence on students' academic adjustment. The study was carried out in Nigeria and focused on social, emotional and physical adjustments, while this study was conducted in Kenya and focused on psychosocial adjustment.

Increased availability of school counselling services was strongly and consistently associated with better student outcomes, according to a Rhode Island study that examined the relationships between school counselling practices, secondary school demographics, and student outcomes over two years (Carey, Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012). Ndirangu (2007) found that the number of GCS adopted by secondary schools in the study area varied in Kenya.

The results also showed that students' academic performance was positively impacted by guidance and counselling programs. In his study conducted in Kenya, Njoka (2014) also discovered that good support through professional guidance and counselling based on a solid understanding and application of counselling theories is crucial for students to succeed academically and profit from their education. According to a study by Mwamwenda (2004), those who have a good self-concept are more well-adjusted and do better academically than those who have a negative one.

According to the government circular number 11 of 2002, the study assumed that GCS had been established in every secondary school in the nation. All schools and teachers'

colleges were required by the circular to set up these services. Even though the majority of African nations acknowledge the value of structured guidance and counselling programs, there aren't enough studies evaluating the efficacy of the services being offered to enhance students' decision-making abilities, which will result in positive changes down the road (Folkman & Moskowit, 2004). Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine how peer victimisation affected the psychological adjustment of students in Kenyan public secondary schools.

Kanus (2022) examined the role of guidance and counselling practice on the social adjustment of secondary school students in Elgeyo Marakwet, Kenya. The study found that guidance and counselling practice offers opportunities under which students adjust to social, emotional and psychological life. The data obtained from the respondents and analysed found that guidance and counselling significantly and positively influenced social adjustment. It was also indicated that those who had rated guidance and counselling highly indicated a higher adjustment score than those who rated it lowly or average. The study was conducted in Elgeyo Marakwet County and focused on secondary schools within the county; meanwhile, this study focused on public secondary schools in Bomet County.

Mutiso et al. (2019) established a relationship between bullying, Substance use, Psychiatric disorders, and social problems in secondary schools in Kenya. The study was carried out using a correlational cross-sectional research design targeting 20 secondary schools selected randomly. Students from Form one to three from the schools were used as respondents. The Drug Screening Inventory and Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaires were given to the student respondents by research assistants. The outcome of this study established that only 86.4% of the 471 students had experienced problems.

Bullying was the most common form of peer victimisation. Bullying effects were high on both types of gender of the bully-victims. From the study findings, schools should have used multifaceted interventions to solve psychosocial challenges. Evelyn (2018) conducted a study among secondary school students in Keiyo North Sub-county, Kenya, to investigate their perception of the influence of guidance and counselling services on school adjustment. The study adopted a mixed method methodology research approach and an ex post facto causal-comparative research design. The sample consisted of 367 students. The study findings showed that there were significant differences in students' perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on school adjustment. While guidance and counselling are considered to be a strong source of students' psychosocial support, the students didn't seem to experience this support. The study recommended uniformity and adequacy in the provision of guidance and counselling services to students.

In order to ensure that every student receives the necessary support to achieve the intended school adjustment, the study also suggested that the difficulties and deficiencies in the delivery of guidance and counselling services be addressed. In addition to guidance and counselling services that offer students psychosocial support and ultimately aid in their adjustment, the current study will implement additional tactics that can complement counselling services to guarantee that students' psychosocial needs are met in a more comprehensive way.

2.2.6 History of Guidance and Counselling Programs in Kenya's Education System

Guidance and counselling is a relatively new field in Kenya, officially recognised in schools in 1970. The Ministry of Education (MOE) established a Guidance and Counselling Unit within its inspectorate division, focusing on educational and

vocational guidance as well as psychological counselling (MOEST, 2005). However, the initiative lacked sufficient support, leading to challenges in its implementation (Okech & Kimemia, 2012). In 1976, the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies recommended integrating guidance and counselling into subjects like religious education and social education to promote self-discipline among students (Republic of Kenya, 1976). Despite these efforts, the services fell short in meeting students' needs due to the government's weak enforcement of policies (Okech & Kimemia, 2012).

The demand for guidance and counselling programs increased in the 1980s and 1990s following serious incidents of school unrest, including arson attacks. A tragic event in 1999 saw 17 girls killed and 70 others sexually assaulted in a mixed boarding school. In March 2000, an arson attack at Bombolulu Girls' Secondary School resulted in 26 deaths, and in 2001, 67 boys were burned to death in their dormitory by fellow students (Daily Nation, 2000; East African Standard Team, 2001). These incidents led the government to set up a commission to investigate the causes of student unrest. Based on the commission's findings, the Report of the Task Force on Student Discipline and Unrest in Secondary Schools recommended implementing guidance and counselling services across all schools (Republic of Kenya, 2001).

Human rights organisations, such as the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect, also advocated for these services. As a result, the government banned corporal punishment in 2001 and recommended establishing guidance and counselling departments in schools (Government of Kenya, 2001). However, these programs are mostly run by teachers who act as counsellors without receiving proper training (Tumuti, 1985; Wambu & Wickman, 2011). These teachers often juggle counselling responsibilities with their regular teaching duties,

limiting the time they can dedicate to counselling, a scenario reminiscent of the United States in the 1920s (Gysbers, 2005; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

Further government efforts to support counselling were outlined in the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP) (2005), which emphasised the importance of addressing issues like rising HIV/AIDS cases, substance abuse, career challenges, and family problems that affect student performance (MOEST, 2005). The government proposed strengthening counselling services by collaborating with the National Agency for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) and other partners to raise awareness among teachers and parents. Despite these efforts, policy responses have remained weak, with no comprehensive guidance programs in place (MOEST, 2005).

Recently, the Ministry of Education introduced a subject called Social Skills into the curriculum, intended to be taught weekly to help students develop emotional regulation and behavioural control. However, the lack of teacher training in this subject has led to resistance from teachers (C. Muthoni, personal communication, July 20, 2010).

2.2.7 Challenges Faced by Counselors in Delivering Guidance and Counseling Services

Several studies have identified multiple challenges that counsellors face while executing their guidance and counselling duties in schools. One of the primary challenges is the lack of formal training for teachers assigned to counselling roles. Traditionally, guidance and counselling have been handled by teachers based on their experience, age, or perceived wisdom rather than through formal education in counselling practices (Patton & McMahon, 2006). However, with evolving student behaviour and increased pressure on behaviour management, professional training in counselling has become essential. Despite this, the effectiveness of guidance programs

remains limited because decision-makers and policy developers often lack the necessary insights (Patton & McMahon, 2006). This lack of awareness affects the formulation of effective policies.

A study by Mahlangu (2011) in South Africa highlighted that teacher-counsellors often face challenges such as inadequate skills, limited staff, and financial constraints. Counselling programs require teachers to possess both theoretical and practical skills, which are essential for effective student support. In Kenya, guidance and counselling have been integrated into university and college curricula, but the implementation is sometimes insufficient. Many teachers, though knowledgeable about counselling concepts, lack the practical skills to address students' challenges effectively (Bernard, 2002). Research by Chepkirui (2011) in Bureti District found that 62% of teacher-counsellors were appointed without prior training, and Arudo (2008) confirmed that many counsellors held the title but provided minimal services to students. Thus, professional training is recommended to enable teacher-counsellors to effectively perform their roles (Arudo, 2008). Furthermore, social and technological changes necessitate continuous counsellor training to remain relevant in managing student needs (Ndichu, 2005).

Another significant issue is the heavy workload placed on teacher-counsellors. Since 1964, the Kenyan government has recognised the importance of guidance and counselling services, urging schools to allocate adequate time for student counselling. However, in practice, most teacher-counsellors are overwhelmed by academic duties and often view counselling as a secondary task (Arudo, 2008). The education system’s focus on examinations has also shifted teachers' attention toward academic responsibilities, limiting the time they dedicate to counselling (Chepkirui, 2011). High student enrollment further compounds the issue, as schools experience overcrowding

without a corresponding increase in teaching staff (Gatheru, 2008). This staff shortage leaves teachers with little capacity to address individual student needs effectively (Wambui, 2011). Overwhelmed by academic duties, many teachers deprioritise counselling, resulting in gaps in student support.

Another challenge is conflicting religious beliefs and attitudes toward counselling programs. Schools, comprising teachers, parents, students, and non-teaching staff, often encounter resistance from parents who view counselling as an invasion of their children's privacy (Yadeta, Bedane, & Tura, 2014). Some parents perceive counsellors as threats to the school environment (Bernard, 2002). School administrators may also view the efforts of teacher-counsellors with suspicion, fearing they pose a challenge to their leadership (Yadeta et al., 2014). Additionally, teachers face ethical dilemmas in counselling students, especially on sensitive topics like abortion or drug use, as religious beliefs can hinder open discussions (Feltham, 2006). These cultural and religious constraints complicate the implementation of comprehensive counselling services.

The lack of resources and facilities further limits the effectiveness of counselling programs. Effective counselling requires dedicated spaces, such as private rooms for confidential sessions, which many public schools cannot afford due to limited budgets (Lehr, 2002). Public schools, prioritising academic achievement, often allocate resources toward examinable subjects while neglecting counselling programs. Overcrowded schools with limited facilities further stretch resources, leaving little room for proper counselling services (Kilonzo, 2013). While no official documentation outlines the resource allocation for counselling programs, it is clear that the lack of facilities presents a significant obstacle to effective implementation.

The role of school counsellors in Kenya remains unclear, leading to confusion among various stakeholders. There is an ongoing debate about whether school counsellors should primarily be regarded as teachers or counsellors. The ambiguity surrounding their identity has left their duties open to interpretation by principals, teachers, parents, and even the counsellors themselves. As a result, school counsellors are often burdened with both teaching and counselling responsibilities, complicating service delivery (Wambu & Wickman, 2011).

The absence of well-defined roles has significantly impeded the effectiveness of school counsellors. Their duties vary across schools, often being determined by the principal. Different stakeholders have differing expectations, with many viewing counsellors solely as individuals who address behavioural or adjustment issues through one-on-one counselling sessions (Wambu & Wickman, 2011). This narrow perspective overlooks other essential roles like advocacy, leadership, collaboration with parents and teachers, and conducting group counselling. It also disregards the importance of classroom guidance on academic, personal, and career development, as outlined by the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) National Model (2012). Counsellors often aspire to provide holistic services, but they are constrained by administrative duties and limited practical training (Okech & Kimemia, 2012).

Career guidance is another area where schools face challenges. Although most schools have a designated career master, the role is typically limited to assisting students with university applications, with minimal focus on exploring various career paths. As a result, students often make uninformed decisions about their courses and future careers (Nyutu, 2007). With proper training, school counsellors could efficiently take on this role, providing students with comprehensive career guidance.

To establish a distinct professional identity, school counsellors in Kenya need a well-defined role and sufficient training to meet the complex needs of students (Lee, 1997). Effective counselling programs require clear communication about the counsellors' responsibilities and tangible evidence of their impact on students. However, most school counsellors continue to perform non-counselling tasks assigned by school administrators due to the absence of structured guidance programs.

Traditionally, becoming a school counsellor in Kenya required one to be a certified teacher, with training typically starting at the master's level. Recently, some universities have begun offering undergraduate programs in counselling, potentially increasing the number of qualified counsellors available to work in both primary and secondary schools. However, varying levels of training pose new challenges, as the absence of standardised guidelines could result in inconsistencies in expertise and service delivery.

There is also concern about whether Kenyan school counsellors receive adequate preparation to address students' academic, personal, and social challenges. Strong theoretical knowledge combined with practical skills is essential for effective counselling, but most training programs in Kenya do not require internships or practicum in school settings. In cases where practicums are offered, they are often conducted in non-school environments, such as hospitals, leaving counsellors without sufficient experience in the educational context. In contrast, counsellors in the U.S. must complete at least 700 hours of practical experience through internships and practicum.

Supervision during training is another challenge. University instructors often serve as supervisors, but without input from site-based supervisors, this oversight is insufficient. Course instructors may lack firsthand knowledge of school settings, which limits their

ability to guide trainees on site-specific issues. This gap in supervision reduces the quality of practical training, particularly in areas such as clinical and ethical practice.

Ethical considerations are critical to counselling, but Kenya currently lacks a unified ethical framework specific to school counselling. Counsellors have traditionally relied on foreign ethical codes, such as those from the American Counselling Association (ACA). In 2012, the Kenya Counselling and Psychological Association (KCPA) developed local ethical standards, but these are broad and not tailored to the unique challenges faced in schools (Okech & Kimemia, 2012). For instance, maintaining confidentiality in schools can be difficult, as principals and teachers often demand information discussed during counselling sessions. Without specific guidelines, school counsellors struggle to justify confidentiality practices to other staff.

Record-keeping presents additional challenges. Some schools lack designated counselling rooms, jeopardising the safety and privacy of student records. Moreover, the absence of clear ethical standards regarding how long records should be kept or who can access them adds to the confusion. Developing counselling-specific ethical standards would greatly enhance service delivery.

Limited resources and inadequate support further hinder counselling services. School counsellors report a lack of cooperation from school administrators, teachers, parents, and the wider community. Without collaborative support, counsellors cannot effectively fulfil their roles. Additionally, many schools lack essential materials, such as books, DVDs, and private counselling spaces, making it difficult to provide quality services. In some cases, counsellors share offices with other staff, compromising the confidentiality of student records.

The location and setup of counselling offices also impact service delivery. Many schools either do not have dedicated counselling spaces or have poorly equipped ones. Community-based resources, which could provide further support for students needing extended therapy, are also lacking. Without these resources, school counsellors are limited in the assistance they can offer, as they have fewer options for referring students for specialised care. A lack of consultation and referral networks further limits the scope of help available to students.

In fact, the success of school counselling programs in Kenya depends on clear role definitions, proper training, adequate resources, and strong support from all stakeholders. Without these elements, school counsellors will continue to struggle to meet the growing needs of students effectively. In line with the Basic Education Act 2014, which lays emphasis on rights-centred approaches in the handling of students, the role of guidance and counselling programs will have to be strengthened. However, this is a multifaceted phenomenon which will need to have all stakeholders coming together. These include the educational managers, the school Board of Management, the school sponsors, as well as the policy makers. Once there is synchrony with all these stakeholders, the result will be the elevation of guidance and counselling programs towards the attainment of moral, spiritual, emotional and psychological formation of the learners.

Guidance and counselling in Kenya primarily emerged to address school discipline issues (Ajowi & Simatwa, 2010). However, limiting counselling to disciplinary matters undermines the profession’s broader role and discourages students from seeking help, as counselling is often seen as a service for those with problems. The concept that counselling should address students' overall development is yet to be fully realised in Kenyan schools (UNESCO, 2002).

The current guidance and counselling system operates under what Gysbers and Henderson (2001) call the “position” model, where teachers are appointed to serve as counsellors alongside their regular teaching roles without additional pay or formal organisational support. These “teacher-counsellors” or “guidance teachers” do not have the professional recognition needed to define school counselling as a distinct field (Wambu & Wickman, 2011). As a result, Kenyan school counsellors struggle with role ambiguity, similar to the challenges faced by U.S. school counsellors in the past (Paisley & McMahon, 2001).

Most schools in Kenya still rely on teachers to provide counselling services, particularly in primary schools, where counsellors are appointed based on personal traits rather than professional qualifications (Njoka, 2007; Tumuti, 1985). Although many high schools now have at least one trained counsellor, many still assign the role to untrained teachers selected by the school principal or the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). These teachers often receive minimal preparation, typically attending short workshops or courses, which limits the effectiveness of counselling services (Nyutu, 2007; Lavusa, 2010).

Guidance and counselling in Kenya mainly focuses on reactive services, addressing students' immediate needs and concerns. Students are typically referred by principals or teachers, with few initiating the process themselves. Counselling sessions often address crises, such as the death of a family member. However, because teachers also serve as counsellors, counselling is limited to breaks, lunchtime, or after school. As a result, only a small percentage of students—primarily those with disciplinary issues—receive counselling. This has contributed to a negative perception of counselling among students, who see it as something reserved for those with behavioural problems (Wambu & Wickman, 2011).

In a nutshell, school counselling in Kenya is still evolving and faces challenges such as a lack of professional identity, limited training, and dual roles for teachers. The absence of a clear organisational structure, combined with the association of counselling with discipline, has limited the effectiveness and accessibility of these services. While most counselling services are available at the high school level, primary schools continue to rely on untrained teachers, further complicating the delivery of effective counselling. However, with the new educational management, which prioritises children, particularly the Basic Education Act, the school management has the task of ensuring that it aligns itself with the provisions of the act in student management. With this, the place and purpose of the guidance and counselling programs will be strengthened and, as such, will be given more attention by the entire education sector. It therefore means that there must be a combination of policy and practice, as well as goodwill.

Besides the school-based challenges, there are home-based challenges that affect the program. Building positive relationships with parents living in poverty and encouraging their involvement in their children's education can be challenging. However, success begins with understanding the realities of parenting under low socioeconomic conditions. Poverty weakens parents' ability to provide adequate care due to the emotional and psychological stress they endure (Kaiser & Delaney, 1996). Parents play a critical role in shaping a child's behaviour, cognition, and social development, meaning that any negative experiences they face due to poverty can negatively influence their child's development. Children depend on their parents to navigate their environment, meet their needs, and offer emotional support. When poverty-related stress prevents parents from fulfilling these roles, a child's development may suffer delays or other adverse effects (Kaiser & Delaney, 1996).

Living in poor environments often deprives families of essential elements that foster growth, such as a strong belief system, security, access to basic needs, and quality family time. As a result, family relationships can deteriorate. Parents in these circumstances may struggle to offer consistent support, provide adequate emotional engagement, and meet their children's needs. They may also model less complex language, adopt more punitive parenting styles, and exhibit less consistency (Kaiser & Delaney, 1996). Additionally, poverty affects parents' participation in school activities. This lower involvement is often not due to a lack of interest but stems from challenges such as limited time, childcare constraints, transportation difficulties, and negative past experiences with education (Kaiser & Delaney, 1996).

Poverty is a multidimensional issue that is particularly visible in urban settings. Urban poverty is not only marked by low income and insufficient access to necessities but also by limited assets, inadequate shelter, and poor infrastructure, including water, sanitation, and drainage systems. Access to services such as healthcare, education, vocational training, and legal protection is also limited. Furthermore, the poor often lack social safety nets and face political exclusion, powerlessness in judicial systems, and bureaucratic challenges (UN-Habitat, 2003). Even individuals who are not financially poor but live in slums experience qualitative poverty due to inadequate housing and infrastructure (World Bank, 2006).

Children at risk of academic failure often come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. It is incorrect to attribute failure to a single factor; rather, multiple overlapping conditions increase the likelihood of academic difficulties. According to Leloy and Symes (2001), poverty is a primary risk factor. Related challenges that contribute to academic struggles include unemployment, homelessness, frequent relocations, limited educational opportunities, substance abuse, unsafe

neighbourhoods, malnutrition, poor health, exposure to environmental hazards, insufficient childcare, lead poisoning, excessive television exposure, and low birth weight.

Cultural sensitivity is essential for supporting children from low-income households. With a growing population of students from impoverished backgrounds, teachers face increasing challenges. To better support these students, educators must understand their needs and the social environments they come from. The social context plays a crucial role in children's development, making it important for teachers to bridge the gap between school values and the cultural values of their students. Given the diversity within society, students often identify with multiple cultural backgrounds, and teachers must navigate these complexities to foster inclusion (Marlowe & Page, 1999).

The challenges discussed underscore the importance of interventions to strengthen counselling programs in schools. Given that counselling is often considered a secondary responsibility, it is crucial to address the workload issues faced by teacher-counsellors. UNESCO (2000) emphasises the need for professionally trained counsellors who demonstrate competence in both knowledge and practical skills. Gysbers and Henderson (2007) further recommend that counsellors remain proactive and adaptive to provide effective student support. Teacher-counsellors require adequate administrative support, including additional staff to reduce their teaching burden, allowing them more time to address students' needs.

To enhance discipline management, Edet (2008) suggests that school administrators should actively encourage teachers to implement counselling programs by setting aside dedicated time for students to express their concerns. However, in some settings, such as Nigeria, the importance of guidance and counselling has been undervalued by school

administrators and stakeholders (Bulus, 2001; Denga, 2001). Teachers may also misuse counselling time to focus on academic subjects considered more important (Roseberg et al., 2009). Chireshe (2012) notes that non-examinable activities like counselling are often seen as less critical, leading to their ineffective delivery.

To improve the effectiveness of counselling programs, Mortimore (2004) advocates for a collaborative approach involving all school staff. Effective counselling requires coordination, cooperation, and teamwork, with each member contributing to the program's success. However, the heavy teaching workload necessitates additional support from school administrators to allow teachers sufficient time for counselling activities. This may involve recruiting more staff to alleviate the academic burden on teachers, enabling them to devote more time to counselling students.

A successful guidance and counselling program must be purpose-driven and responsive to students' needs rather than maintaining the status quo. Stone and Dahir (2006) highlight several strategies for improving school counselling programs, including appointing trained teacher-counsellors, offering training to both teachers and peer counsellors, and establishing school-wide counselling policies. Although research has explored various aspects of counselling programs, further studies are needed to identify the most effective strategies for improving the delivery of these services. The aforementioned is a clear indication that, as much as the guidance and counselling programs are facing a myriad of challenges, the stakeholders have no option other than to navigate through these challenges to strengthen them at the school level to respond to the changing circumstances that students find themselves in while in or out of school. Therefore, addressing the challenges is a nip in the bud towards fostering a psychosocial environment that supports learners.

2.2.8 Future of Counselling in the Education Sector

The future of school counselling in Kenya is promising, but significant changes are required to improve service delivery to students. These changes involve adopting advanced approaches to school counselling policies, redefining counsellors' roles, restructuring training programs, implementing comprehensive counselling frameworks, and fostering systemic support. To enhance the effectiveness of school counsellors, it is essential to establish clear definitions of their roles. Presently, the responsibilities of school counsellors are not fully understood by school staff, administrators, parents, and even the counsellors themselves. A well-defined role will reduce discrepancies in expectations among stakeholders. Collaboration among school administrators, teachers, parents, and counsellors is necessary to develop this clarity.

School counsellors' roles must also be adapted to the specific social and cultural context of Kenya. For instance, in the U.S., counsellors play a vital role in supporting students academically, socially, and in career development. They also implement, evaluate, and refine school counselling programs aimed at student success (ASCA, n.d.). Kenyan counsellors must similarly redefine their roles to address the evolving challenges students face today. They should be equipped with skills for both prevention and response, enabling them to address behavioural issues and provide referrals when necessary. Additionally, counsellors must take on leadership and advocacy roles to foster safe learning environments.

To contribute to educational reform and student success, counsellor education in Kenya requires a significant transformation. Training programs must align with students' evolving needs in the 21st century. This transformation will demand collaboration from stakeholders, including universities, the Ministry of Education, county education officials, and practising counsellors. A review of curriculum content, teaching

strategies, and program design is necessary. The redesign must ensure a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical experience, including supervised practicum and internships in school environments (Romano et al., 2005).

Training programs should focus on developing competencies relevant to the school setting. While the U.S. follows the Council for Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards, Kenya's curriculum largely prepares counsellors for community or private practice, with limited emphasis on the school context. Kenyan universities might need to adopt best practices from other countries, customising them to meet local needs.

Integrating ethical considerations into counsellor training is also crucial. Kenya needs ethical standards specific to school counselling, as general counselling guidelines may not address school-specific challenges, such as managing confidentiality within an educational setting. Ethical training will help future counsellors navigate dilemmas they encounter.

Implementing comprehensive counselling programs is vital for improving counselling services in Kenyan schools. In countries like the U.S., schools have moved towards comprehensive guidance frameworks that integrate prevention, intervention, and remediation (Gysbers, 2012). Kenya, however, still lacks such coordinated programs, resulting in inconsistencies across schools. A shift from fragmented service delivery to systematic programming is needed to address all students' needs effectively.

Comprehensive programs focus on all aspects of student development, including academic, personal, and career growth, and provide structure for organising activities. Implementing such programs also holds counsellors accountable, offering measurable ways to demonstrate their impact on student success (Gysbers, 2004). The ASCA

National Model can serve as a guiding framework for Kenyan schools, helping develop standardised programs and ensuring all students have equitable access to counselling services (ASCA, 2012).

A strong counselling program also requires systemic support. Counsellors need collaboration from school administrators, staff, parents, students, and community resources to succeed. Cooperation with school principals is especially important, as they play a key role in shaping counsellors' functions. When principals, teachers, and counsellors collaborate, counselling services complement rather than compete with other roles within the school system.

Moreover, partnerships with community-based resources are necessary to provide continued care for students requiring additional support. Counsellors should establish networks with other counsellors, researchers, and universities to promote knowledge exchange and consultation. Such support is essential for the effective delivery of guidance and counselling programs.

In conclusion, the future of school counselling in Kenya depends on structural changes at multiple levels. Clear role definitions, improved training, comprehensive counselling frameworks, ethical guidelines, and collaborative efforts are essential for counsellors to meet students' academic, social, and career needs. If these measures are implemented, school counselling can become an integral part of the educational system, ensuring consistent and effective support for all students.

2.3 Research Gap

The reviewed literature on peer-related factors, school environment, family environment, and guidance and counselling indicated varied gaps that this study sought to fill. From the above-reviewed literature, most studies were conducted in different

countries, representing different geographical, social, and economic settings, which could be why the results were contradictory. For those carried out in Kenya, the research studies were carried out on secondary school students in different counties, indicating a need to conduct further studies on secondary school students in Bomet County. Therefore, this study was conducted in secondary school students in Bomet County, Kenya, to fill the gap.

The reviewed literature from other research indicated that most studies focused more on adolescents, including school dropouts and students from different levels. This could have revealed how peer victimisation contributed to psychosocial adjustment and influenced academic performance. The reviewed literature also indicated that some studies were more focused on secondary school girls, and the results could not be used to generalised to all genders. However, to address these gaps, this study focused on secondary school students, where both boys and girls were part of the respondents. Thus, the results depicted how peer victimisation contributes to psychosocial adjustment and how this influenced their academic performance. Also, the findings could be used to generalise the results of all genders in secondary school.

Also, the reviewed studies indicated that university students were used as a unit of observation. According to psychosocial theory, the best stage for psychosocial adjustment is the fifth stage, which is 10-20 years, where there is identity and role confusion. This is where peer victimisation is rampant, and secondary school students fall under this category. While at the university level, there is minimal peer victimisation. Therefore, the results may not apply to secondary school students. To bridge this gap, this study targeted secondary school students who formed the unit of observation.

Lastly, most studies reviewed failed to integrate peer-related factors, school environment, family environment, and guidance and counselling as moderators. Therefore, most studies adopted different variables, while some adopted family support as a mediator. Thus, the current study adopted these factors to ascertain their influence on the psychosocial adjustment of public secondary school students in Bomet County, Kenya. The findings could be compared with the results of the reviewed studies.

2.4 Summary of the Chapter

This section describes the theoretical foundation of the study, that is theories that the study variables are anchored to are critically examined. Further, an empirical review of past and related studies on peer victimisation, guidance and counselling psychosocial adjustment is critically examined to establish the gaps; that is, the contextual, methodological, geographical, theoretical, practical and population gaps that were filled by this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter presented the research design that was employed during this study. It includes the philosophical orientation and the research design, which were adopted during the inquiry. The other sections of the chapter outline the study location, the target population, the sampling techniques and sample size, and instrumentation and their validity and reliability. The last sections of the chapter contain data collection and analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is a philosophical framework or worldview that guides how research is conceptualised, conducted, and interpreted (Guraya et al., 2023). Khatri (2020) contends that a paradigm gives a reflection of a researcher's underlying beliefs about the nature of reality, how knowledge is acquired, and the methods used to gather and analyse data. This study adopted the pragmatist research paradigm. Proponents of pragmatism advocate the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods), depending (Okesina, 2020). The pragmatic paradigm was selected because conducting the study required both quantitative and qualitative data. This study examined the influence of selected peer victimisation mitigating factors on students' psychosocial adjustment. It involved gathering data from three sample groups using quantitative sources like questionnaires and qualitative instruments such as interview guides.

3.3 Research Design

A research design is regarded as a scheme, a strategy, an outline, or a plan that a researcher adopts to collect data, analyse and answer specific research questions or test

the study's hypothesis (Creswell, 2016). According to Nwabuko et al. (2024), a research design outlines the procedures, methods, and strategies for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data to answer the research questions or test hypotheses. It thus gives a clear framework for making decisions about the type of data to collect, the sources of data, how to measure variables, and the techniques that are used to analyse data

The study adopted the pragmatic research paradigm that is associated with a mixed approach, which supports the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (Ayiro, 2012; Rass, 2005). It means that the study utilised the mixed method approach. The approach was preferred because it combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study, which aids in gaining a comprehensive understanding of complex problems which require multiple perspectives (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Further, the approach offers statistical trends and detailed contextual insights, supports triangulation, which enhances validity and reliability and addresses limitations of single approaches by overcoming the weaknesses of solely qualitative or quantitative designs (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

The study employed the convergent mixed methods design (also called convergent parallel design). It involves collecting qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, analysing them separately, and then merging the results during the interpretation stage to provide a well-rounded understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The main features of the design are that both qualitative and quantitative data are given equal priority (Xiong, 2022). In addition, qualitative and quantitative data are analysed separately before merging, and the two as illustrated in Figure 3.1

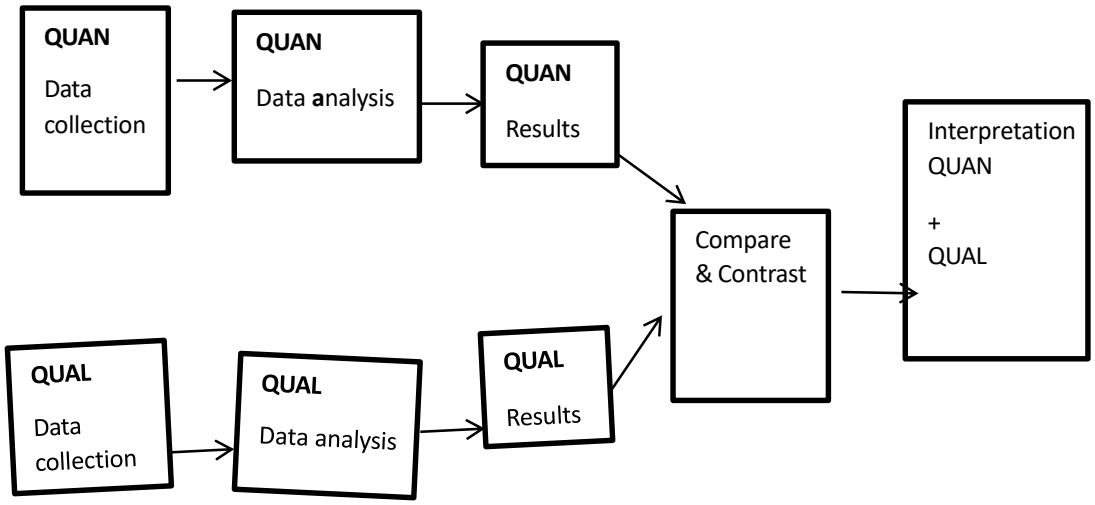

Figure 3.1: Illustration of the Convergent Research Design

Source: Creswell and Plano Clark (2011)

The design was selected because of the advantages associated with it. The inclusion, stronger validation of results through triangulation, balances the strengths of qualitative and quantitative data and clarifies discrepancies between different data (Guillaume-Perrenoud et al., 2023). Its selection was also informed by the nature of the study, which investigated and required a combination of qualitative and quantitative data and testing of hypotheses.

3.4 Location of the Study

The study was carried out in Bomet County, one of the counties forming the Great South Rift of Kenya. The county is located at 0.8°S 35.2333°E of the county and covers an area of 1,630 square kilometres (County Government of Bomet, 2024). It is surrounded by Nakuru county, Kisii county, Nyamira county, Narok county, and Kericho county. The county is subdivided into 5 sub-counties (constituencies): Bomet Central, Bomet East, Chepalungu, Sotik, and Konoin. The topography is undulating/hilly, especially towards the north-east, where the Mau Ridges are (higher altitude) (County Government of Bomet, 2023). Toward the south, the land becomes flatter, though there

are some hills in areas like Chepalungu and Sigor. Rainfall is fairly evenly distributed with two rainy seasons; April-May is wetter, January-February is somewhat drier. The climatic condition allows several agricultural activities to be carried out both on a large and small scale. The main activities are agriculture-related and range from tea, coffee, and dairy farming. Multinational companies like Unilever, Williamson Tea, and James Finlay also carry out large-scale farming of tea and flowers in the region (County Government of Bomet, 2024)

Bomet County was chosen because, like many other regions in Kenya, it has been experiencing challenges related to peer victimisation in public secondary schools, as evidenced by reports of disciplinary cases, frequent absenteeism, and deteriorating academic performance among affected students (County Education Report, 2023).

3.5 Target Population

A target population is the entire group of individuals, events or objects having common observable characteristics to which a researcher wants to generalise the results of a study (Kothari, 2017). It consists of participants or objects that are involved in a study. The target population of this study comprised all deputy principals, Guidance and Counselling (G&C) teachers and students in public secondary schools in Bomet County. The county had about 294 public schools, 531 G&C teachers, 116, and 608 students at the time of the study (County Director of Education, 2023). The study thus targeted these 294 deputy principals, 521 G&C teachers, 116, and 608 students.

The accessible population was all the 294 deputy principals, 285 guidance and counselling instructors who had some training in the area and 29152 form three students from public secondary schools in Bomet County. Public secondary schools were selected because studies have shown that peer victimisation levels in this type of

institution are higher than those in private ones (Greco, 2020). The deputy principals were selected not only because they are part of school management, but also in charge of discipline in schools (TSC, 2020). The Guidance and counselling teachers were targeted because they provide guidance and counselling services and play a key role in students' social adjustment in schools (Kariuki, 2022). The form threes were chosen because, apart from the 4th years, they have been in a secondary school for the longest period of time, and are conversant with most of what goes on in them. Further, they are still adolescents since they are aged between 13-17 years and have been exposed to peer victimisation (UNESCO, 2017; WHO, 2016).

3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Researchers use samples during studies because it is often not possible to involve the whole population in an inquiry due to time, cost, and logistical constraints (Ahmed, 2024). Sampling thus enables investigators to carry out studies efficiently and successfully, and provide valuable insights about the population. Sampling has been defined as the process of choosing a subset of individuals or things from a population to study and make conclusions about the whole population (Wang, 2024). The number of students who took part in the study was determined using the formula for calculating a sample of a finite large population developed by Yamane (1973). The formula is

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n is the sample size

N is the population size

e is the margin of error or error tolerance

1 is a constant

This gave a sample of 395 students, given that their accessible population was 29152.

The number of schools, G&C teachers and deputy principals who participated in the study was based on 10% of the accessible population recommended by Mohajan (2020) for surveys. The sample sizes of G&C and deputy principals were 30 and 29, respectively, given that their accessible populations were 294 and 285.

The researcher used a number of sampling techniques at different stages because the study involved sampling students, guidance and counselling teachers, and the school management represented by the deputy principals. The most commonly used sampling techniques are probability and non-probability ones (Dhlakama & Murairwa, 2024). Probability sampling includes stratified, proportionate, systematic and simple random sampling techniques, while examples of non-probability are purposive and automatic types (Mugenda 2013; Saunders et al., 2012). The unit of study during this inquiry was the school, while the unit of analysis was students, G&C teachers and deputy principals. The sampling frames used during this study were based on the school and the sub-county education office records.

Stratified and proportionate methods were used to determine the number of students, deputy principals and G&C teachers by school category and from each of the 5 sub-counties of Bomet. The school categories were national, extra, county, and sub-county. At the sub-county level, simple random sampling methods were used to select intact from three classes which participated in the study. This was deemed necessary because it is unethical and against the Ministry of Education to break classes for research (National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation [NACOSTI], 2020). Simple random sampling was also used to choose the deputy principals and G&C

teachers who were involved in the study. The sample sizes of the participating groups and sampling procedures are summarised in Table 3.1

Table 3.1: Distribution of the Sample Sizes of the groups which took part in the Study

Category	Target population	Sampling technique	Size
Students	29152	Yamane's formula	395
G&C Teachers	285	10% Mohajan's, recommendation	29
Deputy principals	294	10% Mohajan's recommendation	30

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

The study relied on both quantitative and qualitative data. Which was obtained through the use of guidance and counselling teachers' and students' structured questionnaires, and a deputy principal interview schedule. The questionnaire was preferred because it enables the collection of as ability to gather large amount of data quickly (Kothari, 2017). Further, it is cost-effective and ensures respondent anonymity, potentially leading to more honest responses. The interview schedule was selected because it is ideal for collecting data when a study covers sensitive topics or requires deeper responses that may be difficult to measure using closed-ended items (Dhlakama & Murairwa, 2024). In addition, interviews generate quality data because fewer respondents refuse to take part in them and allow researchers to ask follow-up questions.

3.7.1 Questionnaires

The guidance and counselling teacher's questionnaire was semi-structured as it had both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended question sought information regarding the personal data of the G&C teacher, such as the highest academic qualification, experience, age, and duration worked in the specific school. In addition,

The questionnaire had a Likert Scale to rate the level of students' discipline in the school. Questions on GC programs, perception of the student on the GC programs, correctional strategies and their suitability, and questions on the students' psychosocial development (Appendix III).

The second questionnaire was for the students and had a similar format of closed-ended questions as that of the guidance and counselling teacher. However, additional information on the type of victimisation, the location where it took place, and the action taken was sought. Further, the questionnaire sought information to assess whether the action sought by the victim (Student) had any psychosocial impact (Appendix II). The closed-ended items in the questionnaires were of the 5-point Likert scale, where a value of 5 indicates that the respondent strongly agrees with the opinion, four represents agree, three not decided, 2 disagree, and one strongly agree.

3.7.2 Interview Schedule

The study also interviewed the deputy principals using their interview schedule to probe further into the practice of peer victimisation in schools. The interview schedule was semi-structured (Appendix III). Aung et al. (2021) recommend the use of a semi-structured interview schedule since it is more flexible, allows the researcher to change the order of questions, and allows for an extensive probing of the participant's responses. The schedule had items for soliciting the characteristics of the deputy principals and peer victimisation. It also had items for generating data on guidance and counselling, peer, school and family rated factors and students' psychosocial adjustment.

3.7.3 Piloting

Hulley et al. (2022) define piloting as a small-scale trial run conducted to evaluate and refine the data collection instruments, procedures, and logistical arrangements before full-scale implementation. Piloting a research instrument is crucial because it identifies problems with the way questions are written, allowing for their reformulation for improved comprehension by all respondents. A pilot study may reveal weaknesses of tools, such as wrong numbering, ambiguous statements and insufficient writing spaces that should be corrected before carrying out the main study. The study instruments were pilot tested in two public secondary schools in neighbouring Kericho county. The study was piloted in this county because of its proximity to Bomet County and had features similar to those of the study area. The study used 10 per cent of the sample size to carry out the pilot exercise. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), 10% of the sample size is sufficient for piloting. Quality Assurance of quantitative tools.

3.7.4 Validity

According to Taherdoost (2016), validity is the ability of the data collection instrument to accurately measure what it is intended to measure. Four types of instrument validity were measured before carrying out the study, that is, face validity, content validity, construct validity, and criterion validity (Kothari, 2017). The researcher ensured that the face validity of the research instrument was achieved by ensuring that the form and the language used in the tools were easy to read and understand. Face validity was also achieved by ensuring that the items captured by the study are related to the study variables. Content validity examines how well the instrument covers the essential and relevant areas the study intends to measure. Measuring this validity was accomplished by carrying out a detailed literature review.

The researcher examined past studies, scholarly work, journals, and books to ensure that the data collection instrument covers critical aspects that enabled the researcher to test the study's hypothesis (Rose & Johnson, 2020). The validity of the investigation and the suppositions that can be drawn from it are strengthened when quantitative and qualitative data are combined. This is reflected in the methodological rigour, the rigour of the design and its suitability to meet the research purpose and research questions. It meets the consistency of the outcome and, based on the facts provided, the logical and reliable inferences drawn, and the standard of the data synthesis, thus, conclusions should be drawn (Cohen et al, 2018).

3.7.5 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree to which a research tool produces consistent results after numerous trials (Trochim 2006). Orodho (2009) opine that an instrument's reliability is measured by its consistency in delivering results that are similar throughout the course of numerous trials. Reliability is the consistency of the research instrument (Kumar, 2018). Kothari (2017) posits that it is the extent to which any instrument used for a study can give a similar or consistent output when it is put into use repeatedly. Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) and Asenahabi (2019) regard an instrument's reliability as its ability to give stable, invariant results, and hence factual or predictable whenever it is put into use. In this study, the students' and guidance and counselling teachers' questionnaires' reliability was estimated using the Cronbach's alpha method.. The choice of using Cronbach's coefficient is because it is reliable and saves time as compared to other tests of reliability. In addition, the measurement internal consistency of the instrument ensures that the obtained data is credible, reliable and dependable (Harrison et al., 2020). Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) and Kothari (2017) recommend that an alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above is appropriate. The students' and guidance

and counselling teachers' questionnaires yielded reliability coefficients of 0.831 and 0.765, respectively. The two instruments were deemed reliable since their coefficients were above the 0.7 threshold.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is the physical data collection from respondents required to deduce or answer a research question (Kothari, 2017). The researcher was first cleared by Moi University and sought permission from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), then proceeded to the Bomet County CQASO office and sought permission to visit the sampled schools for the study. After receiving permission, the researcher visited the sampled schools to get to know the administrators, teachers, and students. Lessons were not disrupted by the study because the researcher coordinated with administrators and the leaders of the pertinent departments.

The respondents were assured that the responses they gave would be used in complete confidentiality and for the research study only. By sticking to the timetable set with the respondents, the researcher vowed to accept personal responsibility for the conduct and outcomes of the study. When interacting with respondents, the researcher was forthright and truthful.

Further assurances were given to the respondents that they would receive the research's input if they required it following the study. This was done in an effort to gain the respondents' cooperation. With the assistance of research assistants and guidance and counselling teachers, the researcher then personally administered the instruments for students and questionnaires for guidance and counselling teachers, while the interview

schedule was given to school deputy principals on the second visit. Data collection took place over two months.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are critical considerations that the researcher must adhere to during a study to ensure that high-quality research findings are obtained and uphold the integrity of the respondent as well as that of the researcher (Kothari, 2017). Ethical considerations were upheld before, during, and after the study. Before carrying out the study, the researcher obtained all the necessary permits; this includes an authorisation letter from Moi University and a research permit from NACOSTI. Subsequently, appropriate research techniques that are scientifically competent were designed to deliver earnest research findings. The validity and reliability of the instruments were tested to ensure that the data collected is truthful, accurate, and can be used for inference.

During the data collection exercise, the researcher informed all the participants of the objective and the need to carry out this study and seek their consent to participate. The researcher in no way induced the respondent to make them accept to take part in the exercise. The respondents were also given a choice of withdrawing from the study at any stage if they felt their consciousness was threatened or incompatible.

Further, assurance was given to the respondents that their identities would not be disclosed. A clause on the research instrument also reminded participants not to indicate their names. Lastly, the researcher maintained data integrity by protecting the obtained data and ensuring that it was not used for a purpose other than the intended use. The researcher acknowledged all information obtained from other sources using appropriate citations. Honesty in reporting the findings of this study was upheld as it is unethical to

falsely findings of any study. A final copy of the study was made available to the participants of this study upon request as proof of the fulfilment of all the ethical standards stated herein.

3.10 Data Analysis and Reporting

Data analysis commenced once all the data had been obtained or once the researcher had been assured that there was no possibility of receiving the unreturned questionnaires. After that, the data-cleaning exercise began. This process involved inspecting whether all the questionnaires were filled as instructed, and if not, they were omitted. Returning uncompleted questionnaires was not possible since they had no identification names of individual participants or schools.

Once the data-cleaning exercise was completed, the structured items in questionnaires were coded for analysis using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21 to help the researcher analyse data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics were analysed using Regression and correlation analysis. These tools were used to assess the nature and strength of the relationship between peer victimisation mitigating factors, peer, school and family-related factors and psychosocial adjustment. This involved testing the study hypotheses at the .05 level of significance.

Qualitative data were collected using an interview guide and open-ended questions. The obtained data were organised into themes and analysed thematically as recommended by Creswell (2016). In thematic analysis, each interview question or the open-ended questions should be analysed thematically in two levels: descriptive thematic analysis level and interpretive thematic analysis level. The descriptive level assisted in

identifying and describing existing patterns in the information obtained without deeply examining the underlying meanings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the collected data. The data analysis was conducted as per the study's objectives, which aimed to examine the impact of peer-related, school-related, and family-related factors on the psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. The quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately for interpretation and later combined for discussion.

4.2 Demographic Information

The characteristics of the guidance and counselling teachers and students who participated in the study were analysed before presenting the results of the objectives. Harrison et al. (2020) argue that it is important to analyse characteristics of respondents since it gives the context in which a study is conducted. They further argue that the analysis supports an accurate interpretation of data and enriches the overall credibility of the research.

4.2.1 Demographic Information of Students

The attributes of the students examined were gender, age, their mode of school admission, and their living arrangements at home. These attributes are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Students

Description		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	196	54.4
	Female	164	45.6
	Total	360	100.0
Age	Below 15 Years	66	18.3
	16 - 18 Years	278	77.2
	19 and Above	16	4.4
	Total	360	100.0
Admission	Admitted in Form 1	246	68.3
	Transferred from another school	114	31.7
	Total	360	100.0
Family Structure	Guardian	83	23.1
	One parent	101	28.1
	Both Parents	176	48.9
	Total	360	100.0

According to Table 4.1, most students who participated in the study were female, comprising 54.4% of the 360 students from selected secondary schools. The remaining 45.6% were male students, and the study used a proportional simple random sampling method to select both male and female respondents. The study discovered that 77.2% of the students were between 16 and 18, 18.3% were below 15 years old, and 4.4% were 19 years and above. This suggests that the average age of form three students in public secondary schools in Bomet County was between 16-18 years.

Regarding the students' mode of admission to their respective secondary schools, the research found that 68.3% joined the school through regular admission in Form One, while 31.7% transferred from other schools during their studies. However, the students did not disclose why they had moved from their previous schools. Finally, the study aimed to determine the family structure that the students came from, and the findings revealed that 48.9% of the students came from complete families with both parents, while 28.1% came from single-parent households. The remaining 23.1% stayed with guardians.

4.2.2 Demographic Information of Guidance and Counselling Teachers

The study characteristics of the guidance and counselling teachers examined were gender, age, highest academic achievement, experience and the type of school that the instructor was from. The findings are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Demographic Information of Guidance and Counselling Teachers

Description		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	15	51.7
	Female	14	48.3
	Total	29	100.0
Age	18-24 Years	2	6.9
	25-31 Years	7	24.1
	32-38 Years	11	37.9
	39-45 Years	6	20.7
	46 Years and Above	3	10.3
	Total	29	100.0
Academic Level	Degree	22	75.9
	Masters	4	13.8
	Others	3	10.3
	Total	29	100.0
Experience	Below 5 Years	7	24.1
	6 - 10 Years	16	55.2
	11 - 15 Years	6	20.7
	Total	29	100.0
Type of School	Sub-county School	13	44.8
	County	11	37.9
	Extra County	4	13.8
	National School	1	3.4
	Total	29	100.0

The study findings revealed that 52% of guidance and counselling teachers in public secondary schools were male, while 48% were female. The study also revealed that 38% of these teachers were between the ages of 32 and 38, while 24% were between 25 and 31 years old. Furthermore, 20.7% were between 39 and 45 years old, and 6.9% were below 24 years of age. Finally, 10.3% were above 46 years of age.

Regarding educational qualifications, most respondents (75.9%) had a bachelor's degree, 13.8% had a master's degree, and 10.3% had other qualifications. Interestingly, none of the respondents had a diploma or a PhD degree. However, some guidance and

counselling teachers have obtained a postgraduate diploma in psychological counselling. These results suggest that most teachers were qualified to run the guidance and counselling department effectively.

Regarding work experience, 55.2% of respondents had worked as guidance and counselling teachers in their respective schools for 6 to 10 years. Additionally, 20.7% had worked between 11 and 15 years, while 24.1% had been in the department for less than five years. Finally, most respondents (44.8%) were from sub-county secondary schools, while 37.9% were from county secondary schools. Only 13.8% of respondents were from extra-county secondary schools, and 3.4% were from national secondary schools.

4.2.3 Prevalence of Peer Victimisation in Schools

The study also sought to ascertain whether peer victimisation was prevalent in the public secondary schools. The results of analysing data provided by the students on the status of peer victimisation in schools are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Status of Peer Victimisation in Schools according to Students

Description		Frequency	%
Peer Victimisation in Schools	Yes	240	66.7
	No	120	33.3
	Total	360	100.0
Victim of Bullying	Yes	127	35.3
	No	233	64.7
	Total	360	100.0
Perpetrator of Bullying	Yes	73	20.3
	No	287	79.7
	Total	360	100.0
Reporting of Victimization	Yes	109	30.3
	No	251	69.7
	Total	360	100.0
Forms of Peer Victimization	Teasing	59	16.4
	Physical Confrontation	49	13.6
	Isolation	14	3.9
	Insults	64	17.8
	Snatching of personal effects	99	27.5
	Forced to do duties	20	5.6
	More than one form	55	15.3
	Total	360	100.0

These findings show that 66.7% of the students acknowledged that peer victimisation occurred in their schools, while 33.3% were unaware of such incidents. These results suggest that more than half of the schools included in the study had cases of peer victimisation. The study also aimed to assess the extent of bullying among students in the school. Of the students interviewed, 35.3% reported experiencing bullying, while 64.7% had not been subjected to bullying.

Regarding student-perpetrated bullying, 20.3% of the students admitted to being bullies, while 79.7% of the students denied any involvement in such behaviour. These findings indicate that the number of students who were bullies was lower than the number of students who experienced bullying, indicating that the same students might have been repeatedly involved in these incidents. The study also examined whether students reported incidents of peer victimisation to school management. The results

showed that 69.7% of the students did not report their victimisation, while 30.3% reported the perpetrators to the relevant authorities in the school.

Finally, the study investigated the most common forms of peer victimisation in public secondary schools. The majority of students (27.5%) reported that their personal effects were often snatched, followed by insults (17.8%), teasing (16.4%), more than one form of victimization (15.3%), physical confrontation (13.6%), forced to do other students' duties (5.6%), and lastly, isolation or exclusion from school activities (3.9%). These findings suggest that peer victimisation in secondary schools exists in various forms.

4.3 Peer-Related Factors and Student Psychosocial Adjustment

The first objective of the study was to assess the influence of peer-related factors on the psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County. A semi-structured questionnaire from the student, a structured questionnaire from the G&C teachers, and an interview schedule from the deputy principals were used to collect data for this goal.

4.3.1 Students' responses to items on Peer-related Factors

Analysis was first done using descriptive statistics. The results of analysing students' data are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Students' Responses to Items on Peer-Related Factors

Student Statement on Peer-Related Factors	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
Students help their friends to overcome the stress resulting from bullying in school.	12 3.3%	52 14.4%	30 8.3%	185 51.4%	80 22.2%	3.75	1.06
Students report cases of peer victimisation in school to the relevant department for action to be taken.	28 7.8%	59 16.4%	29 8.1%	189 52.5%	55 15.3%	3.51	1.16
Peer counsellors are well-trained to offer counselling services to students bullied in school.	22 6.1%	28 7.8%	52 14.4%	153 34.2%	135 37.5%	3.89	1.17
Student leaders are effective in identifying and reporting students with bullying habits	50 13.9%	44 12.2%	41 11.4%	110 30.6%	115 31.9%	3.54	1.4
Peer counsellors are well-trained to assist in providing psychosocial support to affected students.	28 7.8%	20 5.6%	61 16.9%	148 41.1%	103 28.6%	3.78	1.15
Students encourage each other to participate in extracurricular activities to enhance socialisation.	8 2.2%	12 3.3%	62 17.2%	167 46.4%	111 30.8%	4.0	0.9
The peer counsellors provide support through group counselling sessions to reduce the impact of bullying in school.	32 8.9%	27 7.5%	62 17.2%	124 34.4%	115 31.9%	3.73	1.23
Peer-related factors index						**3.74**	**0.18**

Table 4.4 indicates responses to students' peer-related factors. On whether students helped their friends to overcome the stress resulting from bullying in school, 12(3.3%) strongly disagreed, 52(14.4%) disagreed, 30(8.3%) were undecided,185(51.5%) agreed, while 80(22.2%) strongly agreed. The study further sought to unveil whether students reported cases of peer victimisation in school to the relevant department for action to be taken. Hence, 28(7.8%) strongly disagreed, 59(16.4%) disagreed, 29(8.1%) were undecided,189(52.5%) agreed, while 55(15.3%) strongly agreed.

On whether the peer counsellors were well trained to offer counselling services to students bullied in school, 22(6.1%) strongly disagreed, 28(7.8%) disagreed, 52(14.4%) were undecided, 153(34.2%) agreed, while 135(37.5%) strongly agreed. The study also

asked respondents if student leaders were effective in identifying and reporting students with bullying habits, and responses were: 50(13.9%) strongly disagreed, 44(12.2%) disagreed, 41(11.4%) were undecided,110(30.6%) agreed, while 115(31.9%) strongly agreed.

On whether peer counsellors were well trained to assist in providing psychosocial support to affected students, 28(7.8%) strongly disagreed, 20(5.6%) disagreed, 61(16.9%) were undecided,148(41.1%) agreed, while 103(28.6%) strongly agreed. On whether students encourage each other to participate in extracurricular activities to enhance socialisation, 8 (2.2%) strongly disagreed, 12(3.3%) disagreed, 62(17.2) were undecided,167(46.4%) agreed, while 111(30.8%) strongly agreed. On whether peer counsellors provided support through counselling sessions to reduce the impact of bullying, 32(8.9%) strongly disagreed, 27(7.5%) disagreed, 62(17.2%) were undecided,124(34.4%) agreed, while 115(31.9%) strongly agreed.

Table 4.4 further presents the descriptive analysis of the influence of peer-related factors on the students' psychosocial adjustment. The findings showed that most students helped their friends overcome the stress from peer victimisation in the school. The results also revealed that the affected students reported peer victimisation to the school authority for action to be taken. This was indicated by a mean of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 1.16, respectively. The school management also trained peer counsellors who were instrumental in offering counselling services to the affected students (M=3.89; SD=1.17).

Related studies have confirmed that the impact of bullying on victims is often greater than that of other forms of peer aggression or victimisation (Felix et al, 2011; Turner et al, 2014; Ybarra et al., 2014). For example, in comparison to peers who encountered

peer victimisation that was not bullying or who reported no victimisation, Felix and colleagues (2011) discovered that students in Grades 5 through 12 who experienced bullying reported lower levels of life satisfaction, school connectedness, and hope. In a nationally representative sample of children and youth aged 6 to 17 years, Turner et al. (2014) found that power imbalance independently increased the traumatic impact of peer victimisation. These findings are especially important because of the long-term effects of peer victimisation in school (McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015).

In addition to peer counselling, the student leaders in the school were effective in identifying and reporting students who were found victimising others (M=3.54; SD=1.40). The study also found that peer counsellors were well-trained in providing psychosocial support to the affected students. This support includes encouraging the students to participate in group activities, such as extracurricular activities and group counselling sessions that include group discussions on matters affecting them in school. Similarly, a study by Moreno et al. (2020) argued that social inclusion of victimised students helped them overcome traumatic experiences associated with a negative assessment of their life, which could cause emotional distress. Maiwa et al. (2021) found that peer counselling helped victimised students adjust psychologically in the school.

The study collected information from guidance and counselling teachers regarding the impact of peer-related factors on students' psychosocial adjustment. Table 4.4 presents the findings. Most respondents agreed that the school's peer counsellors were well-trained to provide professional support to victimised students (M=3.96; SD=0.42). The guidance and counselling department organised group counselling sessions where affected students interacted with peer counsellors on specific days of the week.

The interaction among students during these sessions helped the department to identify and resolve emerging peer victimisation issues in the school (M=4.13; SD=0.58). Peer counselling also encouraged students to confide in their peers, particularly peer counsellors, about bullying incidents, including the types and locations of such activities. These findings imply that the guidance and counselling department can work effectively with the peer counsellors in the school to reduce peer victimisation and assist the affected students in adjusting socially and psychologically to the learning environment in the school.

According to a related study by Juvonen and Graham (2014), between 20 and 25 per cent of young people are directly involved in bullying as either victims, offenders, or both. Similarly, extensive research from Western nations indicates that between 4 and 9 per cent of young people regularly engage in bullying practices, while between 9 and 25 per cent of school-age children experience bullying. There is also a smaller minority of young people known as bully/victims who are both bullies and victims of bullying. A recent meta-analysis of the prevalence of bullying and cyberbullying in various situations (Modecki et al., 2014) included 335,519 youth (12–18 years old) as a total sample.

The authors calculated a mean prevalence of 15% for engagement in cyberbullying and 35% for traditional bullying (both perpetration and victimisation roles). The primary findings indicate that, in comparison to their peers who are not victims, adolescents who experience bullying miss more school and exhibit symptoms of poor academic performance (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009), report higher levels of loneliness and worse health (Fekkes et al., 2006), and experience higher levels of anxiety and depression (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). The intensity of the victimisation experience has an impact on these adverse consequences as well. According to Van der Plog et al.

(2015), victims who experienced multiple or frequent bullying, as well as those who were bullied by several people, suffered more than victims whose experiences were less frequent or committed by fewer peers.

Reijntjes et al. (2010) examined the connection between bullying and internalising difficulties. They came to the conclusion that these issues seem to be both causes and effects of peer victimisation, creating a "vicious cycle" that raises the stability of peer victimisation. Suicidal ideation has also been connected in studies to victimisation (Holt et al., 2015; Klomek et al., 2015). Being bullied is linked to serious mental health symptoms in the short term, as noted by Arseneault et al. (2010) in their review. It also has long-term consequences that may endure until late adolescence.

The study's findings are consistent with a recent systematic review by McDougall & Vaillancourt (2015), which emphasised the need for a sophisticated and multidimensional model to comprehend the direct and indirect relationships between peer victimisation experiences and outcomes as an adult. Lastly, Wolke and Lereya (2015) validated the severe repercussions of bullying above and beyond other environmental and personal factors by examining research on genetically identical monozygotic twins who lived in the same homes but were discordant for bullying experiences.

4.3.2 G&C Teachers' Responses to Statement on Peer-Related Factors

The study sought to find out the responses of the guidance and counselling teachers on peer-related factors. They were provided with 6 statements on a Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The responses are indicated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: G&C Teachers' Responses to Items on Peer-Related Factors

G-C statement on Peer-Related Factors	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
The peer counsellors are well-trained on how to support and handle bullied students in a professional manner	0 0	0 0	3 10.3%	24 82.8%	2 6.9%	3.96	0.42
There are group counselling sessions where victims of Bullying interacts with peer counsellors.	0 0	2 6.9%	20 69.0%	5 17.2%	2 6.9%	3.24	0.69
The peer counsellors provide days (s) within the week to encourage the group counselling sessions.	0 0	0 0	3 10.3%	19 65.5%	7 24.1%	4.13	0.58
Interaction between students assists us in identifying and solving emerging bullying issues.	0 0	0 0	2 6.9%	13 44.8%	14 48.3%	4.41	0.63
The peer counsellors encourage the student to open up to other students, especially to peers counsellors, on cases of bullying in school.	0 0	0 0	0 0	24 82.8%	5 17.2%	4.17	0.38
The school management supports peer counsellors in running their clubs and meetings.	0 0	0 0	0 0	17 58.6	12 41.4%	4.41	0.50
Peer-related factors index						**4.18**	**0.21**

Table 4.5 indicates that the extent of agreement with the items ranged between 58.6% and 100.0%. For example, 100.0% of the respondents agreed that the guidance and counselling department in the school caters for students' psychosocial well-being. The same percentage (100.0% of the respondents also agreed that the guidance and counselling department receives and addresses peer victimisation cases effectively. The lowest percentage was posted by the item "school has enough teachers to supervise the students' activities (58.6%).

4.3.3 Deputy Principals' Views on Peer Factors

Interviews with the deputy principals on peer-related factors and psychosocial adjustments indicated that cases of peer victimisation were being reported in schools.

In some schools, the deputy principals confirmed that the prevalence of psychosocial distress led to increased absenteeism and dropout cases. One of the deputy principals had this to say:

Excerpt 1

> *One boy claimed to have been forced to smoke a cigarette in school; when he declined, the student was forced to undress and dance in front of the perpetrators. When the ordeal was done, the student sneaked out of school and went home. The parents could talk to the affected student, who later agreed to return to school. However, he was accompanied by his parents.*

The interview with the deputy principals also revealed that student leaders, especially class prefects, report cases of peer victimisation to the school management through the respective class teachers or the boarding master. During the interview, the majority of the deputy principals indicated that young students were mostly prone to bullying from older students. On the influence of other peers on psychosocial adjustment, one of the deputy principals had this to say:

Excerpt 2

> *The school has several social clubs, and students are encouraged to register for at least one club. In addition, students are also encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities. The school management believes that some vices, such as peer victimisation, drug abuse, and absenteeism, can be minimised by encouraging inclusivity through group participation. Cases of psychosocial distress among students can be identified by assessing students who don't want to participate in these activities.*

Lastly, the deputy principals indicated that the schools had a guidance and counselling department responsible for handling students with psychosocial distress. The department had guidance and counselling teachers. However, they were not trained to conduct psychological counselling for students. The interviews also revealed that the G & C department was less involved in managing conflicts among students, as most disciplinary cases were handled by the disciplinary committee of the school.

These results indicate that there are peer programmes in schools and they have a significant impact on form one students' adjustment. They support the findings of a study by Sarah et (2016) conducted a parallel study in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. It involved 14,043 first-graders in Uasin Gishu County, 207 school administrators, and 207 counsellors. The results showed that peers had a significant impact on form one students' adjustment, confirming that a friendly and encouraging social environment had a good impact on students' adjustment and retention in school.

4.4 School-Related Factors and Psychosocial Adjustment

The study's second goal was to investigate how school-related factors affect the psychological and social well-being of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County. Qualitative and descriptive statistics were used to analyse data on school-related factors provided by the students, teachers and deputy principal interviews.

4.4.1 Students' Responses to Items on School-Related Factors

The data provided by the students were analysed using descriptive techniques. The results of the analysis were summarised as presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Students' Responses to Items on School-Related Factors

Studentstatement on school-related factors	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
The school has sensitisation programs that address the consequences of peer victimisation.	20 5.6%	46 12.8%	36 10%	169 46.9%	89 24.7%	3.72	1.13
Students are encouraged to report any bullying activities within the school.	20 5.6%	21 5.8%	5 1.4%	149 41.4%	165 45.8%	4.16	1.08
Students are encouraged to report those students showing withdrawal characteristics.	8 2.2%	38 10.6%	54 15%	109 30.3%	151 41.9%	3.99	1.09
The school management encourages inclusivity to curb bullying as a result of perceived diversity.	4 1.1%	82 22.8%	79 21.9%	107 29.7%	88 24.4%	3.53	1.12
Teachers are friendly and approachable to students and can advise students when sought.	26 7.2%	29 8.1%	33 9.2%	108 30%	164 45.6%	3.98	1.23
The school administration has created an anti-bullying policy (Suspension or expulsion) to curb bullying practices.	26 7.2%	56 15.6%	18 5%	143 39.7%	117 35.5%	3.74	1.26
The school management offers counselling to the affected students through the guidance and counselling department.	14 3.9%	13 3.6%	33 9.2%	167 46.4%	133 36.9%	4.09	0.97
The school uses Surveillance cameras and teachers on duty to identify and address peer victimisation.	29 8.1%	36 10%	56 15.6%	125 34.7%	114 31.7%	3.71	1.23
School-related factors index						**3.87**	**0.22**

These results indicate that most students acknowledged that their school had programs to raise awareness about the consequences of peer victimisation (with a mean score of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 1.13). They also agreed that their school encouraged them to speak out and report any incidents of peer victimisation (with a mean score of 4.16 and a standard deviation of 1.08). However, students were uncertain whether their school promoted inclusion as a means of preventing peer victimisation. They were also unsure if the school had a policy to monitor students who showed signs of anxiety, stress, or depression or who exhibited changes in behaviour (with a mean score of 3.99 and a standard deviation of 1.09). This implies that while the school encourages

reporting of peer victimisation, it does not have a system for monitoring changes in student behaviour.

However, most students agreed that their teachers were friendly and approachable when they needed advice (with a mean score of 3.98 and a standard deviation of 1.23). Lastly, the students were unsure if their school had a comprehensive policy on peer victimisation, but they strongly agreed that the school provided counselling services to affected students through the guidance and counselling department. These results suggest that there is a significant correlation between school-related factors such as supervision, peer victimisation policy, and counselling services and the psychosocial well-being of

students.

4.4.2 G&C Teachers' Responses to Items on School-Related Factors

Data gathered on school factors from the guidance and counselling teachers were also analysed descriptively. The results are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: School-Related Factors and Psychosocial Adjustment

G-C Statement on School-related factors	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
The school management developed policies with the support of other stakeholders to curb bullying in school.	0	0	5	20	4	3.97	0.57
	0	0	17.2%	69.0%	13.8%		
Guidance and counselling teachers participate in counselling the victim with other departments, especially disciplinary.	0	0	3	15	11	4.28	0.64
	0	0	10.3%	51.7%	37.9%		
The school provides training in guidance and counselling.	0	0	2	17	10	4.28	0.59
	0	0	6.9%	58.6%	34.5%		
The school has enough extracurricular activities to keep students engaged after class.	0	0	0	13	16	4.55	0.50
	0	0	0	44.8%	55.2%		
The school has enough teachers to supervise the students' activities.	0	0	12	8	9	3.90	0.86
	0	0	41.4%	27.6%	31.0%		
The guidance and counselling department in the school caters for students' psychosocial well-being.	0	0	0	22	7	4.24	0.44
	0	0	0	75.9%	24.1%		
The guidance and counselling department receives and addresses peer victimisation cases effectively.	0	0	0	26	3	4.10	0.31
	0	0	0	89.7%	10.3%		
The school has a suggestion box, and studentsare encouraged to share issues affecting them anonymously.	2	0	0	18	9	4.10	0.97
	6.9	0	0	62.1%	31.0%		
School-related factors index						**4.18**	**0.21**

The information in Table 4.7 shows that the majority of respondents agreed that their schools have policies in place to prevent bullying, with a mean score of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 0.57. Additionally, most respondents reported that guidance and counselling teachers work with other school departments, such as the disciplinary committee, to provide support to affected students, with a mean score of 4.28 and a standard deviation of 0.64. The study also found that schools provide training to guidance and counselling teachers to improve their effectiveness, with a mean score of 4.55 and a standard deviation of 0.50.

Furthermore, most respondents strongly agreed that there are enough extracurricular activities for students to participate in and enough teachers to supervise them, with

mean scores of 4.55 and 3.90, respectively. Finally, the study concluded that the guidance and counselling department is critical to students' psychosocial well-being.

4.4.3 Deputy Principals' Perspectives on School-Related Factors

The results generated from the deputy principals' interviews indicated that public secondary schools in Bomet County had a clear policy for identifying and handling disciplinary cases among students. In one of the interviews, the respondent said that.

Excerpt 3

> *The school has a clear policy that is used to determine the nature of punishment to be given to students with disciplinary cases. The disciplinary action taken includes individual punishment, group punishment, suspension, and expulsion from school.*

The interviews revealed that some schools had sufficient supervisory mechanisms, such as using CCTVs to monitor student activities in school. However, the study found that the major challenge for using CCTV included a lack of sufficient ICT infrastructure. The study also found that the schools did not have enough teachers to supervise student activities; therefore, most activities were carried out by students alone, which could increase the chances of peer victimisation.

The results from the interviews also revealed that teachers were encouraged to be friendly, approachable, and available whenever required to handle students' personal issues. The respondents agreed that in some cases, the students were shy about approaching the teacher to discuss the problems that were stressing them, fearing that they would be reprimanded. Regarding gender, the deputy principals revealed that bullying affected both students equally. However, girls reported peer victimisation more than boys.

On students' feedback on factors affecting them in school, most interviewees indicated that their schools did not have suggestion boxes where students could anonymously

report factors that affected them. The schools with these suggestion boxes were found to be dysfunctional, or the school management did not care to open them often to collect the students' views. Due to this, the school management was not efficient in addressing issues that were likely to cause the students' psychosocial distress.

Similarly, a study based on the social ecological theory was carried out by DeWit et al. (2012) examined the influence of school culture on behavioural problems of adolescents. These included willingness to perform activities and self-esteem, using peer approval of deviance as a mediating variable. Favorableness of school culture was measured by the perceived fairness of school rules and regulations, student autonomy in decision making in the school, support received from other students and teachers in the school, and student conflict and resolution mechanisms.

It was established that perceived unfavourable school culture led to low student attachment to learning and other activities. Further, an unfavourable culture was also found to have a significant relationship with the students' disciplinary problems, substance abuse, hyperactivity, defiant disorder, conduct disorder and low self-esteem. The study indicated that the favorability of the school environment is a continuum where a positive perception of a favourable learning environment motivates the students to associate well with others.

Akanni and Oduaran (2018) carried out related research investigating the mediating roles of academic self-efficacy and academic adjustment among Nigerian university students. A sample of 621 beginning students was involved in this study who reported their academic self-efficacy, academic adjustment, social support and life satisfaction. Results revealed that social support networks from family and faculty members enhanced students' academic adjustment and consequent satisfaction in school life.

Social support encompasses social integration as well as actual and perceived availability of social support experienced by the students. Although the findings of this study reported a positive and significant relationship between psychosocial support and students' academic achievement, the current study was still necessary since it used a different sample, 362 form one students in Kenya. Similar results were obtained by Lephoto and Hlalele (2021) in their study carried out among students in Lesotho. The study aimed at exploring teachers' perspectives on the position of guidance and counselling as a core component for school-based psychosocial support. The sample comprised 18 teachers.

The results revealed that psychosocial support is important in the lives of the students, although it focused more on material needs. To address the issues that contribute to the complex social challenges that negatively impact students and life in school life in general similar other factors must be put into consideration to ensure students' issues are met in their entirety. The current study, therefore, went beyond the provision of support based on material needs to address students' social and psychological needs.

On the same vein, Onyekurub (2020) investigated schools' role in students' social adjustments in Emohua local government secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study indicated that students must adjust to social and school settings to foster their academic performance. The correlational results established that school settings had a strong, negative, and significant influence on social adjustment. The study concluded that teachers must help students to have proper social adjustment. The study looked at social adjustment, and the current study focused on psychosocial adjustment.

The concerns that students have when they transfer from a smaller to a larger school, as well as how the abrupt changes in size, location, and their own role within a large

organisation can impact their identities as learners, have been highlighted by earlier research, such as Wang'eri et al. (2012). Secondary school pupils in Kenya, particularly those starting form one, struggle to strike a balance between their personal demands and how these requirements are met in the classroom. Both psychological and social factors are important in any social setting, such as school, in order to achieve desirable attitudes, good relationships and proper self-understanding that will enhance students' adjustment to the new environment.

School adjustment ensures children develop socially, emotionally, and academically within their learning environment. The adjustment process begins in preschool, where children's academic development involves building cognitive skills and motivation, reflected in achievements and academic efficacy (Perry & Weinstein, 1998). Critical factors that promote academic success include preschool programs, teacher attributes, and school structure (Silva & Cain, 2015; Huang, 2017; Montrosse-Moorhead et al., 2019; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013).

Social cohesion, an essential part of school adjustment, refers to children's ability to form positive relationships with peers and adults while behaving appropriately in various settings (Allsopp et al., 2000; Ladd & Price, 1987). Well-adjusted children display strong social skills, engage meaningfully with peers, and are more likely to be accepted by others (Betts et al., 2012; Ladd et al., 2017). Emotional adjustment involves recognising, understanding, and managing emotional experiences (Saarni, 1985) and plays a vital role in fostering positive relationships and academic success (Sallquist et al., 2009; Valiente et al., 2013). During preschool, children develop self-regulation skills, gradually becoming less dependent on adult intervention and learning to manage emotions and behaviour through interactions with peers (Campbell, 2006). Behavioural adjustment, reflected in self-discipline, impulse control, attention, and delayed

gratification, is essential for success in school (Perry & Weinstein, 1998). Early school adjustment lays the foundation for overcoming developmental challenges (Graham et al., 2018; Lakhani et al., 2017; Stipek, 1997), with cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural skills developed in preschool contributing to long-term academic success and well-being (Collie et al., 2019; Duncan et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2015). Early adjustment to school reduces the likelihood of future educational difficulties.

Changes in family and social dynamics highlight the need for comprehensive support for young children. Factors such as poverty, cultural diversity, and parental influences contribute to varied preschool classroom environments (Durlak et al., 2011; Pianta & Cox, 1999). Research on child development emphasises the importance of supporting school adjustment to counteract these influences. According to a conceptual framework, children's adjustment is influenced by broader school factors, such as academic and social climate, policies, resources, and individual characteristics. At the classroom level, teacher practices, peer relationships, and social interactions further shape the adjustment process (Perry & Weinstein, 1998). A child's relationships with teachers and peers, combined with the support provided at school, play a key role in their adjustment (Brackett et al., 2011; Chi et al., 2018; Pakarinen et al., 2010; Poulou & Bassett, 2018; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). Offering developmental support to children from diverse backgrounds helps them adapt, allowing them to take full advantage of educational resources.

Preschool introduces children to new experiences, including unfamiliar people, routines, and rules. They must adjust to increased independence, navigate peer interactions, follow structured routines, remain engaged for longer periods, and assume new responsibilities. Professional support during this transition is crucial to fostering participation and easing the adjustment process. School counsellors provide

developmental counselling, helping children understand themselves, recognise their potential, and develop the skills needed to adjust to school (Cook-Greuter & Soulen, 2007; Hall et al., 2003).

The role of school counsellors extends beyond academic support, fostering holistic development (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). The American School Counsellor Association (ASCA, 2012) identifies school counsellors as educational leaders who deliver structured counselling programs and collaborate with educators, administrators, and families to address the needs of students from preschool to grade 12. In Turkey, school counsellors implement preschool guidance programs in coordination with other teachers, school leaders, and parents (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2012). These services help children build social skills, develop self-confidence, establish personal boundaries, and cultivate positive attitudes toward learning (MoNE, 2020).

Schools and classrooms organise various activities to support children's adjustment. Research has explored both the effectiveness of these programs (Domitrovich et al., 2017; O'Farrelly et al., 2020) and the factors influencing school adjustment (Bosman et al., 2018; Hosokawa & Katsura, 2017; Ladd et al., 1996; Ostrov et al., 2019). This study examines how school counsellors support children's adjustment in academic, social-emotional, and behavioural dimensions. Academic adjustment focuses on performance and engagement, social adjustment emphasises relationships with teachers and peers, emotional adjustment pertains to emotional responses in the classroom, and behavioural adjustment reflects participation in activities (Birch & Ladd, 1996; Ladd, 1989, 1996, 2003). Research indicates that children who successfully adjust to school are better positioned to take advantage of learning opportunities and face fewer challenges throughout their educational journey.

4.5 Family Related Factors and Psychosocial Adjustment

The third objective was to investigate how family-related factors affect the psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County. The aims of the objective were achieved by analysing data gathered from G&C teachers, students and deputy principals.

4.5.1 Students' Response to Items on Family-Related Factors

The students' responses to the items used to collect their views on family-related factors were analysed using descriptive techniques. The results are indicated in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Student Responses to Statements on Family-related Factors

Student Statement on Family-related Factors	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
There is sufficient parental involvement in my activities at home, which helps me cope with pressure from school.	18 5%	46 12.8%	38 10.6%	161 44.7%	97 26.9%	3.76	1.13
I have friendly and approachable parents who encourage me to share with them my experiences with friends in school.	35 9.7%	45 12.5%	28 7.8%	90 25%	162 45%	3.8	1.37
Good communication between my parents and me encourages me to share the challenges I face in school.	14 3.9%	42 11.7%	28 7.8%	101 28.1%	175 48.6%	4.01	1.17
Interaction sessions between students, parents, and teachers encourage students to raise emerging issues affecting them at School	15 4.2%	41 11.4%	18 5%	149 41.4%	137 38.1%	3.97	1.12
Sufficient parental involvement in my well-being encourages me to report bullying activities in schools.	16 4.4%	47 13.1%	67 18.6%	112 31.1%	118 32.8%	3.74	1.17
The parental guidance and counselling I receive at home have helped me adjust to the school environment.	16 4.4%	32 8.9%	23 6.4%	163 45.3%	126 35.0%	3.97	1.08
My parents can identify and get concerned when I am psychologically stressed or disturbed.	34 9.4%	35 9.7%	52 14.4%	112 31.1%	127 35.3%	3.73	1.30
Family-related factors						**3.85**	**0.12**

The results presented in Table 4.8 show that, on average, the students had sufficient support from their parents regarding their activities at home. This support helped them handle the stress of school-related activities. However, the students were uncertain whether their parents encouraged them to share their experiences with friends at school (mean=1.37; standard deviation=1.13). Sharing such information could help parents and guardians understand what happens in schools. Most students agreed that good communication with their parents encouraged them to talk about the challenges they faced in school (mean=4.01; standard deviation=1.17).

Moreover, most students felt that sessions involving parents, teachers, and students helped them raise issues affecting them in school (mean=3.97; standard deviation=1.12). The students also agreed that when their parents were involved in their well-being, they were more likely to report bullying incidents at school, which helped parents take necessary action to protect them from further harm (mean=3.74; standard deviation=1.17). As for whether parental guidance and counselling at home helped students adjust to the school environment, the majority of students agreed with a mean of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 1.08. Similarly, with a mean of 3.73 and a standard deviation of 1.30, most students felt that their parents recognised and showed concern when they were under psychological stress.

4.5.2 Guidance and Counselling Teachers' Views on Family-Related Factors

The study further sought guidance and counselling on teachers' responses to family-related factors. The responses are indicated in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: G-C Teachers' Responses to Statements on Family-Related Factors

G-C Student Statement on Family-related Factors	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
The friendly and approachable parents encourage the students to share their experiences with friends in school.	0	0	10	16	3	3.76	0.64
	0	0	34.5%	55.2%	10.3%		
The GC teachers encourage parents to have sufficient parental involvement in their children at home to help them cope with pressure from school.	0	0	3	19	7	4.13	0.58
	0	0	10.3%	65.5%	24.1%		
Interaction sessions between students, parents, and teachers encourage students to raise emerging issues affecting them at school.	0	0	0	22	7	4.24	0.43
	0	0	0	75.9%	24.1%		
The counselling department has a session that ensures there is student-parent interaction.	0	3	5	7	14	4.10	1.05
	0	10.3%	17.2%	24.1%	48.3%		
The school has sensitisation programs which encourage parents to participate in their child's upbringing.	0	0	0	24	5	4.17	0.38
	0	0	0	82.8%	17.2%		
Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about the importance of inclusivity and diversity in school.	0	0	3	10	16	4.45	0.69
	0	0	10.3%	34.5%	55.2%		
Family-related factors						**4.14**	**0.22**

According to the study, Table 4.9 indicates responses of guidance and counselling teachers who were asked about how family-related factors affect a student's psychosocial adjustment in school. The teachers agreed that parents who were approachable and friendly encouraged their children to share their experiences with their peers, which helped them open up about issues of peer victimisation (M=3.76). Additionally, the teachers encouraged parents to be involved in their children's lives at home to help them cope with the pressure of school (M=4.13). These interactions between students, parents, and teachers allowed students to raise issues affecting them at school (M=4.10).

The study also found that the counselling department had a session that ensured student-parent interaction (mean=4.10). Furthermore, the school developed sensitisation programs through the guidance and counselling department to encourage parents to participate in their child's upbringing (means=4.17). Lastly, the teachers encouraged parents to discuss with their children the importance of inclusivity and diversity in school to minimise cases of exclusion and peer victimisation (mean=4.45).

These results suggest family factors were associated with students' psychosocial well-being. A similar study was carried out by Kurt (2022), who sought to determine how individual dynamics influenced students' psychosocial adjustment in middle schools in Turkey. The study found that family support affected academic achievement on psychosocial adjustment. The family environment was used as a mediating factor. The study concluded that family support played a more significant role in enhancing psychosocial adjustment than gender. The study used family support as a mediating factor, while this study used the family environment as one of the independent variables.

Alam (2017) carried out a study on the effects of family on adolescent adjustment in India. The study focused on joint families and nuclear families. From the observation, it was revealed that joint families and nuclear families had significant differences in emotional adjustment. The other observation was that adolescents from joint and nuclear families significantly differed in social adjustment. And lastly, it was revealed that adolescents from joint and nuclear families had significant differences in educational adjustment.

The study concluded that a joint family setting had a stronger influence on adolescent adjustment than a nuclear family. This was because the joint family had more adults advising the adolescents, and they positively adjusted. The study focused on the joint

and nuclear family, while this study focused on the family environment in general. The study also focused on adolescent adjustment as a dependent variable, while on the other hand, this study focused on the psychosocial adjustment of the student.

The study results are similar to on carried out by Cutrín, et al., (2018) to assess the longitudinal effects of parenting practices on non-violent and violent antisocial behaviour and drug use among adolescents in Spain: a moderating role of deviant peers was used to examine change in the behaviour of 663 adolescents drawn from 13 public secondary schools from Galicia (Spain) aged between 12 and 15 years. The influence of parenting model (parental support and parental knowledge) on deviant peers and the source model (parental solicitation, adolescent disclosure and parental control) on peer deviancy was assessed. The findings of the study established that low levels of parental knowledge, peer monitoring led to high levels of peer deviance among adolescents and thus an increase in problematic behaviours such as bullying and drug abuse. High Parental support, enhanced awareness of the adolescents led to increased social, psychological adjustment and non-violent behaviour.

Davis et al. (2020) similarly sought to examine the relationship between exposure of adolescents to parental and community violence and its relationship with perpetration of bullying and peer victimisation among early adolescents in the United States of America. Specifically, the study examined how the adolescents' exposure was linked to depression, impulsivity, delinquency and school belonging. The study adopted a parallel process growth mixture latent transition technique to examine the trajectory profiles of the 1,611 youths from Midwestern schools that were used in the study.

The findings showed that the majority of the adolescents (63.7%) from increasing community violence and decreasing parental violence transitioned to high victimisation

and high bullying class. Therefore, exposure of early youth to any form of violence at home from parents and from the community increases the youth's aggressiveness and victimisation experiences in school. However, victimisation can be prevented by identifying students with those characteristics.

Similar to this study was one carried out by Njoku (2021), who sought to determine the effect of family structure on psychosocial adjustment in secondary schools in Ebonyi state, Nigeria. The study focused mainly on single-parent and step-parent families and how they influenced the students' psychosocial adjustment in secondary school. It was observed that there was a significant influence of family structure on the psychosocial adjustment of students in secondary schools in Ebonyi. The findings could not be generalised to represent the findings of family environment because the data were only obtained from single-parent and step-parent families. Therefore, this study addressed the gap by focusing on the family environment at large.

Kay, Runo & Muola (2019) conducted a related study to examine the impact of family constellations on the psychosocial adjustment of university students in Nakuru County, Kenya. Specifically, the study focused on self-efficacy, self-esteem, social skills development, pro-social behaviour and emotional intelligence of regular university students. The result indicated that self-efficacy and self-esteem had statistically significant differences across the different family setups. The study used undergraduate students, whereas this study used secondary school students.

The findings resemble/support those of Fleming, McCleary-Sills, Morton, Levtov, Heilman, & Barker (2015). These authors examined how societal factors negatively affect teenagers and the overall impact that has on the guidance and counselling

approaches. They examine the impact of such violence within intimate partner relationships and its consequences on children born into abusive households, either as

direct victims or witnesses to the abuse of one parent. They posit that men experience higher rates of violence compared to women, particularly due to factors such as war, street violence, and gang-related activities, sometimes initiated by family members. In extreme cases, this violence can lead to suicide. Meanwhile, women and girls are frequently subjected to sexual violence by individuals they know personally (Kiss, Schraiber, Hossain, Watts, & Zimmerman, 2015). Efforts to prevent and protect victims from gender-based violence have grown increasingly complex. Unless there are proper psychosocial mechanisms, it can be increasingly difficult to help these young people move out of the situation.

In a bid to cope with the challenges that come with bad societal experiences, surveys indicate that many survivors of sexual violence, especially young people, end up involved in commercial sex work. In some cases, students who are introduced to intimate relationships early lose interest and focus in their academic pursuits. Women who endure physical abuse often choose separation from their partners, resulting in single-parent households. Children raised under such difficult circumstances tend to struggle academically (Deering et al., 2014). It may therefore be necessary to have active coping mechanisms that can enable the children to be assisted to cope actively.

Poverty is another key factor affecting family dynamics and students' academic performance. It can be exacerbated when parents suffer from chronic illnesses, as noted by Bista, Thapa, Sapkota, Singh, and Pokharel (2016). Adolescents from economically disadvantaged families, especially those lacking pocket money, are at higher risk for psychosocial issues. Guidance and counselling play a critical role in fostering

responsible behaviour among these teenagers, helping them manage their limited resources. Without proper support, adolescents may engage in antisocial activities such as stealing, gambling, or prostitution (Epstein, 2018). Some may also withdraw from social interactions, hindering their emotional and psychological development. The death of loved ones presents another major challenge for adolescents, especially when they are left without guardians. According to Siddiqui (2011), such experiences can disrupt young people's emotional well-being, and Mumbi (2009) emphasises the importance of school-based guidance and counselling to help these students regain their focus and continue with their education.

Gambling is a common coping mechanism among students seeking to earn money. It involves a combination of skill and chance, offering both excitement and the potential for rewards (Jack, 2018). However, gambling addiction often goes unnoticed until it has taken hold. Relationships with family and peers suffer as gambling-related debts and deceit create emotional strain. Addicted individuals may become dependent on others to bail them out, leading to criminal behaviour, job loss, family breakdowns, social isolation, and, in some cases, suicide (Norton & Watt, 2014).

Gambling is also linked to substance abuse, as teenagers involved in gambling are often exposed to drugs and other harmful behaviours. Williams (2006) found that for many students, gambling is a minor diversion that results in limited loss of time and money. However, a subset of students engage in gambling extensively, risking large sums of money and developing severe psychological and behavioural disorders (Heise, 2018). Therefore, from the aforementioned, it is prudent to conclude that active coping mechanisms ought to be aware of the fact that adolescents are facing a myriad of challenges that need to be addressed both within the school environment and the home environment.

4.6 Role of Guidance and Counselling and Psychosocial Adjustment

The fourth objective was to assess the role of guidance counselling on the Psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County. This involved determining the provision of guidance and counselling services in schools, then establishing its role in students' psychosocial adjustment. Determination of provision of guidance and counselling services in schools was conducted using data from the students, G&C teachers and deputy principals.

4.6.1 Students' Perspectives on Guidance and Counselling

Data on guidance and counselling from the students was analysed using descriptive techniques. The results of the analysis are summarised in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Students' Responses to Items on Guidance and Counselling

Student Statement on G/C	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
The guidance and counselling department offers sessions for bullied students.	37 10.3%	25 6.9%	47 13.1%	155 43.1%	96 26.7%	3.78	1.23
The guidance and counselling teacher has trained peer counsellors on how to handle bullying cases.	18 5.0%	28 7.8%	32 8.9%	124 34.4%	158 43.9%	4.4	1.14
The Department of Guidance and Counselling often meets with students and peer counsellors to solve issues affecting students.	29 8.1%	15 4.2%	26 7.2%%	183 50.8%	107 29.7%	3.90	1.12
The guidance and counselling teacher is friendly and approachable to students.	18 5.0%	21 5.8%	17 4.7%	117 32.5%	187 51.9%	4.20	1.10
The department allows personal guidance and counselling sessions for disclosure purposes.	13 3.6%	16 4.4%	60 16.7%	188 52.2%	83 23.1%	3.87	0.94
The department can cover the needs of the affected students.	12 3.3%	35 9.7%	78 21.7%	144 40.0%	91 25.3%	3.74	1.04
Group and individual counselling are done to support all victims of bullying.	26 7.2%	36 10.0%	76 21.1%	113 31.4%	109 30.3%	3.67	1.20
Students' G&C index						**3.94**	**0.27**

The results presented in Table 4.10 reveal that most respondents were neutral about whether the Guidance and Counselling department offers sessions for bullied students,

with a mean score of 3.78. This may imply that even though the schools had a guidance and counselling department, few students could seek services from the department. The respondents also agreed that the guidance and counselling teachers have trained peer counsellors to handle bullying cases, resulting in a mean score of 4.4. The respondent further indicated that the Department of Guidance and Counselling often meets with students and peer counsellors to solve issues affecting students, with a mean of 3.90.

These findings also reveal that there was cooperation between the peer counsellors, guidance, and counselling teachers to ensure that affected students get support to adjust psychosocially to the school learning environment. The respondents also strongly agreed that the guidance and counselling department was friendly and approachable to students and allowed personal guidance and counselling sessions for disclosure purposes. This resulted in a mean of 4.20 and 3.87, respectively.

Finally, it remained uncertain whether the department effectively covered the needs of the affected students, with a mean of 3.74. The respondents also agreed that they carried out group and individual counselling to students who had been bullied and the perpetrators of bullying. The guidance and counselling index (M = 3.94, SD = 0.27) was high, given that it was based on a 5-point scale. This was an indication that schools have functioning G&C programmes.

The perceptions of counsellors and students play a significant role in shaping the effectiveness and success of guidance and counselling programs in schools. However, despite the widely recognised benefits of these services, challenges persist in their implementation (Gladding, 2004). Gladding argues that how teachers and students interpret and view guidance and counselling services is a key factor influencing the

effectiveness of these programs. These perceptions can either support or hinder the success of counselling initiatives.

Mwangi (2002) examined students' perceptions of counselling services in Loreto secondary schools. The study examined whether age, gender and counselling expertise of teacher-counsellors influenced students' willingness to seek guidance. The results showed that these demographic factors had little effect on students' decision to access counselling services. Nevertheless, the overall participation rate in counselling was found to be below average. Similarly, Wachira (1997) studied the preparedness of school administrators and highlighted that insufficient training in counselling among teachers resulted in poor competence, leading to negative attitudes toward the program.

Teachers' and students' perceptions about guidance and counselling services can range from positive to negative, depending on their personal views. Shertzer and Stone (1981) emphasised that attitudes and opinions from others can significantly impact the effectiveness of counselling programs. In a school setting, teachers and students may hold diverse opinions on counselling, but collaboration between them is essential to ensure success (UNESCO, 2011).

A study conducted by Chireshe (2011) in Zimbabwe explored how both students and counsellors perceived the benefits of school counselling. While academic improvement and creating a safe school environment were not highly regarded, both groups acknowledged several advantages of counselling, such as better study habits, enhanced self-image, reduced anxiety, and more effective time management. Students also identified additional benefits, including exposure to career opportunities, positive attitudes, and improved classroom behaviour.

However, Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) noted that students' misconceptions about counselling services have contributed to the program's ineffectiveness, ultimately impacting the learning process. It is essential to help students develop positive perceptions of counselling, as this can encourage them to seek support voluntarily. Yunis (2006) further explained that students' attitudes towards seeking help influence their willingness to use counselling resources. Students with favourable attitudes are more inclined to seek counselling, while those with negative attitudes tend to avoid it. Therefore, special attention must be given to promoting positive attitudes among students to foster engagement with counselling services.

Teachers and students also play a critical role in ensuring the utilisation of school counselling services through teacher-counsellor collaboration and student referrals. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of school counsellors is crucial to this process. However, research suggests that teachers do not always view the role of school counsellors or psychologists positively and may undervalue their contributions (Dean, 1980; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Gilman & Medway, 2007). Negative perceptions about counselling services can discourage teachers and students from seeking support, further undermining the program's effectiveness (Comfort, 2013)

Although multiple studies have explored the challenges and practices of school counselling, Poor perception of guidance and counselling programs is one of the main problems teacher-counsellors face (Nyamwaka et al., 2013). Research indicates that several antecedents are linked to the decision to seek help. According to Sanders (1981), a person's decision to seek therapy for depression is significantly influenced by social comparison information from peers and relatives. Students' attitudes towards asking for help may also be influenced by their perception of secrecy. However, there is a

conundrum around confidentiality in educational settings that involves the counsellor's dual roles as a teacher and mental health professional (Lunderthal et al.1984).,

The availability of guidance and counselling services also affects attitudes towards seeking help. It has been observed that raising awareness of guidance and counselling services is crucial in Kenya (Mwangi, 1991). Research has also demonstrated that students' opinions and use of these programs are influenced by their awareness of them. Compared to their private school peers, Nyingi (2014) found that public school pupils were more aware of guidance and counselling services. Additionally, despite not knowing the value of guidance and counselling, the majority of students gave it excellent marks. The majority of the sample knew that advice and counselling services existed, according to Gitonga (1999). According to Rutondoki (2000), while most students have a positive attitude towards counselling-related services, very few are even aware of the opportunities available. The study also revealed that some students did not ask for assistance because they believed they could handle their problems on their own or gain support from their peers.

Nyokabi and Thinguri (2015) found that the majority of students were aware of and had favourable opinions about the G&C programs that were already in place in schools. However, there have been conflicting reports of students not considering school counselling necessary (Gitonga, 1999; Nyamwange et al., 2012). The vast majority of them expressed disapproval of guiding and counselling services. On the other hand, students believed that the resources for counselling that were offered were insufficient to address their requirements. According to the literature, students' negative attitudes towards guidance and counselling stem from their perception of the services' worthlessness, their incapacity to resolve their own issues or those of their peers, their fear of being seen with a counsellor, and their concern about confidentiality (Muema

& Kiilu, 2013; Gitonga, 1999). These studies point to a conclusion that perception of the Guidance and Counselling programs is very critical towards their success or otherwise. It thus behoves the school managers and the stakeholders at large to put in place mechanisms that will be aimed at improving the perception of the students and the school fraternity towards the Guidance and Counselling programs. For this to be done, there ought to be well-thought-out plans that are based on theoretical and practical expertise in Guidance and Counselling. This must also involve working with stakeholders outside the school environment, such as the chaplaincy, as well as parents, to reinforce the program's perception.

4.6.2 Teachers' Views on Guidance and Counselling

Data on guidance and counselling were collected from the teachers using a set of 7 items in their questionnaire. Descriptive procedures were used to analyse the data. Table 4.11 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 4.11: Teachers' Responses to Statements on Guidance and Counselling

Statement	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
The guidance and counselling department counsels both bullying victims and perpetrators.	0 0	0 0	3 10.3%	21 72.4%	5 17.2%	4.07	0.51
There are group counselling sessions to encourage students to open up about issues affecting them in school.	0 0	0 0	0 0	15 51.7%	14 48.3%	4.48	0.51
The guidance and counselling department reports bullying perpetrators to the disciplinary committee for disciplinary action	0 0	0 0	8 27.6%	19 65.5%	2 6.9%	3.79	0.56
The guidance and counselling department follows up on counselled students to ensure they have adjusted to the school environment.	0 0	0 0	0 0	19 65.5%	10 34.5%	4.34	0.48
The guidance and counselling department encourages open communication between the students and the department through the use of suggestion boxes.	0 0	0 0	14 48.3%	13 44.8%	2 6.9%	3.59	0.62
The guidance and counselling department protects students' identities who report unethical practices among students in school.	0 0	0 0	8 27.6%	16 55.2%	5 17.2%	4.89	0.67
A student can reach the counselling department anytime to ensure the issues are solved before escalating into a problem	0 0	0 0	0 0	22 75.9%	7 24.1%	4.24	0.32
Teachers' G&C index						**4.20**	**0.43**

Table 4.11 presents the findings, which indicate that the guidance and counselling departments in these schools focused on both bully victims and perpetrators. They organised group counselling sessions to encourage students to share their problems, and perpetrators of peer victimisation were disciplined by the disciplinary committee. These steps were taken to reduce peer victimisation and promote student discipline. Additionally, the department followed up with counselling to ensure they adjusted well to the school environment, with an average score of 4.34 indicating the teachers' effort to ensure proper adjustment. While respondents were unsure if suggestion boxes were

used to facilitate communication between students and the department, it was found that the department ensured students' privacy when reporting unethical practices. Furthermore, students had access to the counselling department to report any issues affecting them in school.

A similar study was carried out by Onijigin (2020), who sought to determine the influence of counselling on the behaviour adjustment of students from public secondary schools in Nigeria. It was established that the concept of counselling in most schools was low, and there were no efforts from the relevant authority to embrace the service.

The findings also indicated that counselling was influenced by social, emotional and physical adjustments. However, counselling had an insignificant influence on students' academic adjustment. The study was carried out in Nigeria and focused on social, emotional and physical adjustments, while this study was conducted in Kenya and focused on psychosocial adjustment.

Increased access to school counselling services was strongly and consistently associated with better student outcomes, according to a related study conducted in Rhode Island that examined the relationships between school counselling practices, secondary school demographics, and student outcomes over two years (Carey, Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012).

Ndirangu (2007) found that the number of GCS adopted by secondary schools in the study area varied in Kenya. The results also showed that students' academic performance was positively impacted by guidance and counselling programs. In his study conducted in Kenya, Njoka (2014) also discovered that good support through professional guidance and counselling based on a solid understanding and application of counselling theories is crucial for students to succeed academically and profit from

their education. While most African countries acknowledge the importance of structured guidance and counselling programs, there are insufficient studies that evaluate the effectiveness of the programmed services being implemented to improve the students' decision-making processes that will lead to beneficial improvements in the future (Folkman & Moskowit, 2004). Mwamwenda (2004) conducted a study that confirms that people with positive self-concepts are better adjusted and perform better at school than people with negative self-concepts. The study conceptualised that all secondary schools in the country have established GCS in accordance with government circular number 11 of 2002, which ordered all schools and teachers' colleges to establish these services.

4.6.3 Psychosocial Adjustment

The study also assessed students' psychosocial adjustment in secondary schools in Bomet County. Data on psychosocial adjustment as provided by the students and G&C teachers. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse this data; the results derived from the students' data are presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Students' Responses to Statements on Psychosocial Adjustment

Statement	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
I am happy and content with how I carry out school activities.	10 2.8%	10 2.8%	30 8.3%	140 38.9%	170 47.2%	4.25	
After counseling by the G/C teacher, my academic performance has improved over the last one year.	30 8.3%	15 4.2%	55 15.3%	139 38.6%	121 33.6%	3.85	
After counseling by the G/C teacher, I feel appreciated and acknowledged by my peers in school.	24 6.7%	14 3.9%	71 19.7%	144 40.0%	107 29.7%	3.85	
After counseling by the G/C teacher, I don't have trouble controlling my temper.	30 8.3%	34 9.4%	39 10.8%	132 36.7%	125 34.7%	3.80	
After counseling by the G/C teacher, I don't feel like hitting someone on a slight provocation.	22 6.1%	29 8.1%	68 18.9%	120 33.3%	121 33.6	3.80	
After counseling by the G/C teacher, I don't feel like leaving school due to too much pressure from friends.	33 9.2%	32 8.9%	45 12.5%	110 30.6%	140 38.9%	3.81	
Students' psychosocial adjustment index						**3.98**	

As indicated in Table 4.12, the study revealed that most students agreed that they were happy and content with the manner in which they were carrying out their school activities (mean). The students also indicated through a mean score of 3.85 that their academic performance had greatly improved over the past year after being counselled by the G/C teacher. Further, with a mean score of 3.85, the students indicated that they felt much appreciated and acknowledged by their peers in the school. The students could also calm down and have their temper controlled due to being talked to by the guidance and counselling teachers (mean=3.80). The students indicated that before counselling, they could get proved easily, which could result in threatening or bullying other students (mean3=3.80). Finally, with a mean score of 3.81, the students revealed that after counselling, they were determined to stay in school as they had minimal peer pressure. According to information gathered from guidance and counselling teachers, most of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that a student's psychological

adjustment in school can lead to better emotional regulation, improved problem-solving abilities, and increased self-esteem. Furthermore, positive psychosocial adjustment can lead to higher rates of school completion and improved academic performance overall.

The results of this study are similar to those of Onijigin (2020), who sought to determine the influence of counselling on the behaviour adjustment of students from public secondary schools in Nigeria. It was established that the concept of counselling in most schools was low, and there were no efforts from the relevant authority to embrace the service.

The findings also indicated that counselling was influenced by social, emotional and physical adjustments. However, counselling had an insignificant influence on students' academic adjustment. The study was carried out in Nigeria and focused on social, emotional and physical adjustments, while this study was conducted in Kenya and focused on psychosocial adjustment. Increased availability of school counselling services was strongly and consistently associated with better student outcomes, according to a Rhode Island study that examined the relationships between school counselling practices, secondary school demographics, and student outcomes over two years (Carey et al., 2012). In Kenya, Ndirangu (2007) established that secondary schools in the study area differed in the number of GCS that they had implemented.

The findings also indicated that the guidance and counselling program had a positive impact on students' academic performance. In his study conducted in Kenya, Njoka (2014) also discovered that good support through professional guidance and counselling based on a solid understanding and application of counselling theories is crucial for students to succeed academically and profit from their education. According

to a study by Mwamwenda (2004), those who have a good self-concept are more well-adjusted and do better academically than those who have a negative one.

The study conceptualised that all secondary schools in the country have established GCS in accordance with the government circular number 11 of 2002. The circular mandatorily instructed all schools and teachers' colleges to establish these services. Although most African countries recognise the important role of organised guidance and counselling programs, there are inadequate studies which assessed the effectiveness of the programmed services being implemented so as to improve the students' decision-making processes that will lead to beneficial improvements in the future (Folkman & Moskowit, 2004). Kanus (2022) examined the role of guidance and counselling practice on the social adjustment of secondary school students in Elgeyo Marakwet, Kenya. The study found that guidance and counselling practice offers opportunities under which students adjust to social, emotional and psychological life. The data obtained from the respondents and analysed found that guidance and counselling significantly and positively influenced social adjustment. It was also indicated that those who had rated guidance and counselling highly indicated a higher adjustment score than those who rated it lowly or average.

4.6.4 Psychosocial Adjustment according to G&C Teachers

The data on Psychosocial adjustment provided by the G&C teachers was also analysed using descriptive methods. The results are given in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: G&C Teachers' Responses to Statements on Psychosocial Adjustment

G-C Statement on Psychosocial Adjustment	SD	D	UD	A	SA	M	SD
Psychosocial adjustment enhances the emotional regulation of the student.	0 0	0 0	3 10.3%	21 72.4%	5 17.2%	4.06	0.52
Psychosocial adjustment enhances the adaptability of the student.	0 0	0 0	0 0	12 41.4%	17 58.6%	4.59	0.50
Psychosocial adjustment enhances the Problem-solving skills of the student.	0 0	0 0	0 0	20 69.0%	9 31.0%	4.31	0.47
Psychosocial adjustment enhances the Self-esteem of the student.	0 0	0 0	0 0	11 37.9%	18 62.1%	4.62	0.49
The psychosocial adjustment increases school completion rates.	0 0	0 0	6 20.7	16 55.2%	7 24.1%	4.03	0.68
The psychosocial adjustment increases academic performance.	0 0	0 0	3 10.3	13 44.8%	13 44.8%	4.34	0.66
Teachers' psychosocial adjustment index						4.33	0.25

Table 4.13 reveals that the majority of the students agreed with the items on psychosocial adjustment; the percentage of those who agreed ranged from 66.9% to 86.1%. Most (86.1%) of the students agreed that they were happy and contented with how I carry out school activities. Similarly, a majority (72.2%) agreed that after counselling by the G/C teacher, their academic performance had improved over the last year. The item, after counselling by the G/C teacher, I don't feel like hitting someone on a slight provocation, posted the lowest agreement (66.9%). The item mean scores ranged from 3.80 to 4.25, while the overall psychosocial mean score (index) was 3.98 (SD = 0.18).

4.7 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were carried out to establish the direction and strength of the relationship between the study variables. This was done using correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. The analysis was carried out to enable the researcher to test the hypotheses of the study.

4.7.1 Correlation Analysis

The correlational analysis involved relating the index of the peer victimisation mitigating factors with that of students' psychosocial adjustment. The results for the correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Correlation Analysis relating Peer Victimisation Mitigating Factors and Psychosocial Adjustment

		Peer-related factors	School-related factors	Family-related factors	Psychosocial Adjustment
Peer-related factors	Pearson Correlation	1	0.587	0.565	0.615**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	360	360	360	360
School-related factors	Pearson Correlation		1	0.625	0.637**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.000	.000
	N		360	360	360
Family-related factors	Pearson Correlation			1	0.689**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.000
	N			360	360
Psychosocial Adjustment	Pearson Correlation				1
	N				360

These results indicate that peer-related factors had a significant positive relationship with school-related factors (R=0.587), family-related factors (R=0.565) and psychosocial adjustment (R=0.615) of students in public secondary schools in Bomet county. School-related factors were found to have a significant positive relationship with family-related factors (R=0.625) and psychosocial adjustment (R=0.637). Finally, the study established that family-related factors had a significant positive relationship with the student's psychosocial adjustment. Therefore, psychosocial adjustment of the students was found to have a strong, positive, significant relationship with peer-related factors, student-related factors and family-related factors (R=0.615, R=0.637, and R=0.689), respectively.

4.7.2 Regression analysis

Additional analysis was conducted by examining the combined effects of the peer victimisation mitigating factors on psychosocial adjustment. A multiple regression test was used to determine the combined effect. The results of the multiple regression are presented in Tables 4.15 to 4.17.

Table 4.15: Model Summary of a Multiple Regression of Peer, School and Family Related Factors and Psychosocial Adjustment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.530[a]	0.281	0.275	0.70148

a. Predictors: (Constant), Family-related, peer-related and school-related factors

The model summary presented in Table 4.15 revealed that R^2 was 28% which means that the variation in the psychosocial adjustment of the student in the public secondary schools was associated with the predictor variables being peer-related factors, student-related factors and family-related factors. 72% of the variation in the psychosocial adjustment of the students was due to other factors that were not considered in this study.

The study further tested the regression in the hypothesis based on the analysis of variance F output. The interpretation of the results is presented in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16: Multiple Regression Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	68.333	3	22.778	46.290	0.000[b]
	Residual	175.176	356	0.492		
	Total	243.509	359			

a. Dependent Variable: Psychosocial Adjustment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Family-related, peer-related and school-related factors

Results in Table 4.15 found that F = 46.290 and P=0.000, meaning that the null hypotheses were accepted at p=0.000<0.05. therefore, this established a significant

relationship between peer victimisation and the student's psychosocial adjustment. Peer victimisation in public secondary schools influenced the students' psychosocial adjustment. The coefficients of the test are presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17: Coefficients of the Multiple Regression Tests

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.409	.228		6.170	.000
	Peer-related factors	.172	.068	.149	2.550	.011
	School-related factors	.185	.073	.157	2.543	.011
	Family-related factors	.289	.057	.307	5.062	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Psychosocial Adjustment

Table 4.16 presents the correlation coefficients, which revealed that peer-related factors, student-related factors and family-related factors had a positive and significant relationship with the students' psychosocial adjustment($P<0.05$).

Therefore, the regression model was presented as;

$$Y=1.409 + 0.172X_1 + 0.185X_2 + 0.289X_3 + \varepsilon$$

The model indicates that when all other variables and factors are kept constant, a unit increase in peer-related factors leads to a 0.172 (17.2%) increase or variation in the psychosocial adjustment of the students. Similarly, a unit increase in school-related factors leads to 18.5% variation in psychosocial adjustment, while a unit increase in family-related factors leads to a 28.9% increase in Psychosocial Adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet county. Family-related factors had the highest influence on the students' psychosocial adjustment, followed by school-related and finally student-related factors.

The findings of the current study support those of Forberg et al. (2022) in their study carried out in Gaza to investigate the effect of a school-based and teacher-led intervention among students. The results indicated a positive correlation between the support students receive from teachers and their academic adjustment. The researchers found that students who experienced sound psychosocial support responded positively and showed improvement in various domains, including better school functioning. With adequate psychosocial support, the students reported better school functioning, a reduced level of stress-related symptoms and better study skills, among others.

These findings agree with those of the current study, which show that students who received adequate psychosocial support also adjust with ease in the school environment. This highlights the effectiveness of psychosocial support and its power in facilitating students' process of adjustment. The results of the current study equally support earlier findings by Gungor (2019) in his study to investigate the relationship between social support and students who were overwhelmed by academic activities in school and therefore experienced various challenges. His results indicated a significant relationship between students' psychosocial support and school adjustment.

Gungor found out that students who were given maximum support in school exhibited higher levels of school adjustment that resulted in increased academic performance. Hence, social support was found to be essential in the learning environment. These results are in line with the current study's findings, which showed that teacher assistance was crucial to pupils' transition to school. The implication for this is that perceived psychosocial support influences school adjustment. The key players involved in helping the students adjust to the new school environment need to invest heavily in psychosocial support during this stage. These findings of the current study concur with those of

Awang et al. (2014) from their study in Malaysia, which aimed to determine whether students who received social support adapted faster to university life or not.

To ensure racial diversity, the researchers involved students of Chinese, Malaysian and Indian origins. Their study's findings showed a strong positive correlation between students' adjustment and their degree of support. The researchers discovered that students adapted to the university setting more quickly the more support they received. These results are in line with the findings of this investigation, even though the current study focused on secondary school students' adjustment. These findings imply that by increasing the level of psychosocial support among form one students, they are better supported to adjust in the school. Therefore, the students who face challenges in school adjustment may be due to inadequate psychosocial support.

Consistent results were found by Akanni et al. (2018) in their study carried out in Nigeria to determine the reconciling roles of academic self-efficacy and academic adjustment among university students. The study involved first-year students who were interviewed to achieve the set objectives of the study. The findings of this study revealed a strong positive correlation between academic self-efficacy and students' academic adjustment. Further conclusions were made that social support received from family and department members facilitated students' academic adjustment and resulted in satisfaction with school life.

4.8 Test for the Moderation Effect

The study examined how guidance and counselling affected the relationship between peer victimisation mitigating factors and students' psychological adjustment. Hierarchical regression was used to determine the effect. This involved generating an interactive term by multiplying the mean indices of the three predictor variables and the

index of the moderator variable (guidance and counselling). The interaction term (standardisation) was created because it minimises multicollinearity and makes the interpretation of results easier. The R^2 change and F change in the model summary table were used to assess the effect of the interaction term and, subsequently, whether peer victimisation moderates the relationship between the factors and the outcome. The results are in Tables 4.18 to 4.20.

Table 4.18: Model Summary of the Moderating Effect of Guidance and Counselling

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.530[a]	0.281	0279	0.69951
2	0.677[b]	0.459	0.456	0.60760

a. Predictors: (Constant), Peer victimisation (x)
b. Predictors: (Constant), Peer victimisation, peer victimisation * Guidance and counselling (X, X*M)

The results presented in Table 4.18 revealed a change in R^2 from 28.1% to 45.9%. The significant change in R^2 implies that guidance and counselling significantly moderate the relationship between the predictor variables and the psychosocial adjustment of the students in public secondary schools. It can be argued that while peer, school and family-related factors assisted the affected students to adjust socially and psychologically to the school, guidance and counselling services offered in the school played a key role in enabling the students to adjust. The ANOVA component of the test results is presented in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19: The ANOVA Component of the Hierarchical Regression Test Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	68.333	1	68.333	139.64	.000[b]
	Residual	175.176	358	.489		
	Total	243.509	359			
2	Regression	111.714	2	55.857	151.30	.000[c]
	Residual	131.795	357	.369		
	Total	243.509	359			

a. Dependent Variable: Psychosocial Adjustment
b. Predictors: (Constant), Peer victimisation (x)
c. Predictors: (Constant), Peer victimisation, peer victimisation*Guidance and counselling (X, X*M)

Analysis of variance results in Table 4.18 indicate that peer victimisation, guidance and counselling had a statistically significant relationship with psychosocial adjustment of the students (F (2,151.303), P=0.000<0.05). The coefficients of the regression procedure are presented in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20:Coefficients of the Hierarchical Regression Test

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.409	0.213		6.614	0.000
	x	1.001	0.085	0.530	11.817	0.000
2	(Constant)	2.705	0.220		12.277	0.000
	X,	0.460	0.154	0.243	2.996	0.003
	X_M	0.237	0.022	0.881	10.840	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Psychosocial Adjustment

The findings in 4.20 revealed that the peer victimisation curbing mechanism, that is, through peer-related factors, school-related factors and family-related factors, has a positive and significant effect on the psychosocial adjustment of the students (B=1.001, P=0.00<0.5). The results further revealed that guidance and counselling had a positive moderating effect on the relationship between the curbing mechanism of peer victimisation and psychological adjustment (B=0.237, P=0.000<0.05). However, the curbing mechanism of peer victimisation that is peer-related factors, school-related factors and family-related factors still had a positive and significant effect even after moderation by guidance and counselling (B=0.460, p=0.000<0.05).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

The chapter presents a summary of the study findings based on the objectives of the study, the conclusion, and the recommendations of the study. In addition, the study makes recommendations for further research related to this topic.

5.2 Research Findings

The study sought to establish the Influence of Peer victimisation mitigating factors on Students' Psychosocial Adjustment in Public Secondary Schools in Bomet County-Kenya. The findings are discussed as per the objectives of the study, which were to assess the influence of peer-related factors, school-related factors, family family-related factors on the psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet County. In addition, the study sought to assess the moderating effect of guidance and counselling on the relationship between peer victimisation and students' psychosocial adjustment.

5.2.1 Peer-Related Factors Influencing Students' Psychosocial Adjustment

This first objective was aimed at finding out whether there is an existence of a strong support mechanism that can cushion the students in coping with psychosocial issues affecting them while at school. To this end, the study established that there is a prevalence of peer victimisation in public secondary schools in Bomet County. This ranged from physical bullying as well as psychological victimisation, which negatively affects the students' mental state. However, the findings of this study were able to support the conclusion that despite the presence of psychological stressors, most students helped their friends overcome the stress from peer victimisation in the school. The affected students reported peer victimisation to the school authority for action to

be taken. At the same time, the study established that the guidance and counselling department trained peer counsellors who were instrumental in offering counselling services to the affected students. These students were carefully selected from among the rest and taken through the process of counselling. Besides, they were also sensitised on the ethical and personality requirements of counsellors. The students received tremendous support from their colleagues and were trusted with the process of offering counselling to them, whether group or personalised. This made the affected students cope with psychosocial stressors and thus improve their academic performance.

In addition to peer counselling, the student leaders in the school were effective in identifying and reporting students who were found victimising others. This was also strengthened by the sensitisation of students on their rights and campaigns against bullying or any other type of mistreatment of students. At the same time, the student leaders were a critical link between the school management and the students, as they could identify and report the students' changes in behaviour. Further, the study found that the peer counsellors were trained on how to handle students with psychosocial stress; this includes encouraging the students to participate in group activities such as extracurricular activities and group counselling sessions that include group discussions on matters affecting them in school.

Finally, the study established that some guidance and counselling teachers through the peer counselling clubs organised group counselling sessions where affected students interacted with peer counsellors on specific days of the week. These sessions could provide an opportunity for interaction between teachers and students, allowing peer counselling teachers and peer counsellors to identify and resolve emerging peer victimisation issues. Peer counselling teachers also encourage students to confide in their peers, particularly peer counsellors, about bullying incidents, including the types

and locations of such activities. However, because of fear of reprisals, some students feared disclosing the stressors to the counsellors. At the same time, a few students expressed reservations about the confidentiality of the peer counsellors and, as such, could not fully disclose all the psychological experiences that they were going through to them. However, in many cases, the peer counselling model was found to be very effective and efficient in responding to the psychological needs of the students in the selected schools.

5.2.2 School-Related Factors Influencing Students' Psychosocial Adjustment

School-related factors were found to influence the students' psychosocial adjustment in school. The study established that most public secondary schools in Bomet County had developed programs aimed at raising awareness about the consequences of peer victimisation. In addition to raising awareness, it was also established that the schools had a ‘zero tolerance policy’ to bullying and victimisation of students and those found to be engaging in this behaviour were subjected to severe consequences. The consequences range from effects on the affected student arising from various forms of peer victimisation to consequences targeting perpetrators of peer victimisation, which include punishments, suspension, and expulsion.

It was established that the schools under study encouraged students to report incidents of peer victimisation in school. However, this was not efficiently done as some schools had no suggestion box. The absence of a suggestion box meant that the students would fear disclosing the information they have because of the fear of being victimised by their colleagues. At the same time, some sensitive information ought to be kept confidential and anonymous. Therefore, this was seen as a limiting factor towards efficient guidance and counselling programs in these schools.

The schools did not have an elaborate program or policy that was aimed at promoting inclusion in school activities as a means of limiting or preventing cases of peer victimisation. Similarly, the study found that there was no effective policy in place to evaluate the students' psychosocial state. Thus, it was difficult for the school to identify and address psychosocial challenges among students. For example, a strong chaplaincy that is empowered to work with the Guidance and Counselling department was manifestly absent. This was an indication that while the school encourages reporting of peer victimisation, it does not have a system for monitoring changes in student behaviour. Teachers were also found to be friendly and approachable whenever the students had pressing issues that required their attention.

The guidance and counselling teachers revealed that the guidance and counselling department in the schools worked closely with other school departments, such as the disciplinary committee, to provide support to affected students. The schools also provided training and development programs to guidance and counselling teachers to improve their effectiveness in service delivery. They further indicated that the schools had enough extracurricular activities for students to participate in, as well as enough teachers to supervise those activities.

5.2.3 Family-Related Factors Influencing Students' Psychosocial Adjustment

The study also sought to determine how family-related factors influence the student's psychosocial adjustment. On this, the study established that psychological support from parents helped students cope with psychosocial stress and related challenges in school. This is because students' psychological state is influenced by both home-based and school-based factors, and since at home the relationship with parents is more personal and individualistic, this plays a very significant role in minimising stressors among the students. However, it was established that not all parents gave their children this

support. In the end, this increases the chances of students not being able to adjust appropriately in school. When the parents do not create a conducive environment which allows the child to explain to them their experiences, this ends up suppressing the children, and as such, they continue to experience psychological stress. Parents who gave psychosocial support to their children did so by encouraging them to share with them the experiences they had with other students in school. They were also involved in monitoring and supervising the students' activities at home.

It was also established that those parents who are actively involved in their children's mental wellness have devised several strategies, such as listening, close monitoring and supervision of their children, as well as noticing any changes in their behaviour. Close supervision enabled parents to identify aggressive, antisocial, withdrawal, or unique changes in the behaviour of the students at home. This enabled parents to establish the challenges the students were having in school and take timely measures to address them. The study also established that good communication between the parents and students encouraged students to share their school-life experiences, including the challenges they faced. Finally, the guidance and counselling teachers indicated that they encouraged meetings involving parents, teachers, and students. These meetings were meant to allow students to raise issues affecting them in school. The teachers also encouraged parents to closely supervise the students' activities at home. Therefore, parental control, close supervision, and counselling were fundamental in mitigating the psychosocial distress among students in public secondary schools.

5.2.4 Influence of Guidance and Counselling on Psychosocial Adjustment

The last objective was to establish how Guidance and Counselling influences students' psychosocial adjustment. The students indicated that public secondary schools in Bomet County offered guidance and counselling services to students who had

psychosocial distress. However, not all students sought help because of the nature of the program. In some schools, the department was very professional, and this encouraged students to disclose their stressors without fearing any victimisation. In other schools, the students could not trust the department with sensitive information because they feared that it would be disclosed and hence bring more animosity among them. The affected students who did not seek help from the department feared being victimised for reporting the perpetrators, as most schools had no policy in place to protect whistleblowers. Students not seeking guidance and counselling services despite the prevalence of psychosocial distress in secondary schools could also be attributed to a lack of awareness that such departments exist in the school or the nature of services available. It was noted that the guidance and counselling department worked alongside the disciplinary committee to address cases related to peer victimisation.

The study found that in some schools, the guidance and counselling department established a peer counselling club and trained peer counsellors on how to identify and handle students who were affected by bullying. The findings also revealed that there was cooperation between the peer counsellors, guidance, and counselling teachers to ensure that affected students get support to adjust psychosocially to the school learning environment. However, despite the services rendered by the department and the peer counsellors, students were not satisfied with the services.

5.3 Conclusions

Several conclusions can be derived from this study based on the findings. Firstly, it can be concluded that peer-related factors have a significant influence on the student's psychosocial adjustment. Peer counselling and student leadership in school are very instrumental in establishing patterns of peer victimisation, perpetrators of the vice, and the affected students. Since the students do understand what experiences they are

undergoing while at school and at home, such forums can go a great deal in reinforcing a culture of peer-to-peer mentorship and assistance. Therefore, the training of peer counsellors is essential in ensuring that they are able to identify and address issues related to peer victimisation. Students also encourage their peers to participate in extracurricular activities to promote inclusivity. Group counselling sessions held by peer counsellors help in addressing challenges that students face in school.

Similarly, on school-related factors, the study concludes that indeed these factors affect the student's psychosocial adjustment. Several schools had policies in place regarding measures to be taken in case of indiscipline cases in general, but did not address peer victimisation. The study noted that in most schools, the management encouraged students to report cases of bullying. Still, there were no means of reporting these cases apart from approaching the management or teachers directly. This discouraged most students as they feared being victimised further. The absence of suggestion boxes or protection of identity was a limiting factor towards reporting all cases as is supposed to be. This ends up making some students fail to disclose information that may be helpful.

The study also concluded that the lack of sufficient guidance and counselling for teachers with qualifications in psychological counselling hampered the efficiency of service delivery. The guidance and counselling department worked effectively with the peer counsellors and student leaders in the school to reduce peer victimisation and assist the affected students in adjusting socially and psychologically to the learning environment in the school.

Lastly, on the influence of family-related factors, the study concluded that parents play a critical part in influencing the student's psychosocial support and adjustment. However, most students lacked this support, which could be provided through close

supervision, parental control, and parent-student engagement through efficient communication structures.

5.4 Contributions of the Study to Theory, Policy and Practice

The findings of this study provide significant contributions to theory, educational policy, and practice in addressing students' psychosocial adjustment challenges resulting from peer victimisation in secondary schools. The study advances theoretical understanding of students' psychosocial adjustment by supporting social-ecological and social learning perspectives, which emphasise the interconnected roles of peers, schools, and families in shaping students' behaviour and emotional well-being. The moderating role of guidance and counselling aligns with resilience theory, which posits that supportive interventions can buffer the adverse effects of negative experiences such as victimisation. The study thus enriches existing theoretical frameworks by integrating guidance and counselling as a key resilience-building mechanism in the adjustment process.

The study underscores the need for education policymakers, particularly those in schools and within the Ministry of Education, to strengthen policies that promote safe, supportive, and inclusive environments. By revealing that peer, school, and family factors influence students' psychosocial adjustment, the findings call for the development and enforcement of anti-bullying policies and frameworks for school-family partnerships. Moreover, since guidance and counselling were found to moderate the effects of peer victimisation, policymakers should institutionalise comprehensive guidance and counselling programs by ensuring that every school has trained counsellors and adequate resources to support students' mental well-being.

Practically, the study provides educators, school counsellors, and parents with actionable insights for improving students' psychosocial health. Teachers and administrators are encouraged to foster positive peer interactions, enhance school connectedness, and create awareness about the effects of bullying. School counsellors can use the findings to design targeted interventions that help victimised students develop coping strategies and resilience. Additionally, collaboration between schools and families should be enhanced to provide consistent emotional and social support for learners both at home and in school. In summary, the study contributes to evidence-based policies, strengthens theoretical understanding of adolescent adjustment, and guides practical interventions that promote the psychosocial well-being of students in secondary schools.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendation was made to the Ministry of Education, the administration, management of the public secondary schools, the guidance and counselling department, and other policymakers;

The school has a program to assess the students' social and psychological stressors at school.

i. The school management should intensify the sanitisation programs aimed at addressing the impact of peer victimisation and creating awareness of the available guidance and counselling services.
ii. The school should encourage the students to report or seek help from the guidance and counselling department whenever they face issues that they cannot resolve in the school. The schools should also provide suggestion

boxes to ensure the anonymity of the students reporting on cases of peer victimisation.

iii. The school, through the guidance and counseling department, should have a guideline on the periodical sessions between students, teachers, and parents to address issues affecting students.

iv. The school established a properly organized guidance and counseling department with well-trained teachers who are with a sole mandate of offering professional guidance and counseling services in their school.

v. In service programs should be organized to strengthen schools' Guidance and Counselling department so that they can respond to the emerging changes in students' behaviour.

vi. The ministry of Education should come up with elaborate mechanisms and guidelines that guide the establishment, operations and scope of the Guidance and Counselling programs in schools.

vii. The school sponsors should be given a central role in partnering with the department in order to assist the students, particularly in both character and spiritual formation.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

The study recommends that further research on other areas,

i. A similar study can be carried out focusing on tertiary colleges or universities to assess the influence of guidance and counselling in curbing the learners' psychosocial adjustment.

ii. Because the study was limited to Bomet County, it would be ideal to carry out a similar study focusing on a broader area scope.

iii. Further study can be carried out to assess the students' perception of the services offered by the guidance and counselling department on the students' psychosocial adjustment in public secondary schools.

iv. A study can also be carried out on the preparedness of Guidance and Counselling programs towards the social and technological changes affecting students.

v. A study on how the CBC (Competency Based Curriculum) integrates guidance and counselling programs in its syllabus and the implications.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introduction Letter

Teresa J. Sogomo

P.O Box 3900,

Eldoret.

Dear Respondent,

SUBJECT: DATA COLLECTION

I am a student at Moi University undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology. I am conducting research on; "**Influence Peer Victimization on Students' Psychosocial Adjustment in Public Secondary Schools in Bomet County, Kenya**". You have been selected to participate in the study and give your opinion on this. Kindly complete the Questionnaire to assist me in collecting data. Your information, alongside others, will help me in my research which is strictly for academic purposes. Also, the information will be treated as confidential, therefore, do not write your name or any other form of identification anywhere in the Questionnaire. Your honest response will be very useful for the success of this study.

Thank you,

Yours faithfully,

Triza J. Sogomo

Appendix II: Questionnaire for the Students

This Questionnaire seeks to obtain information on peer victimization and psychosocial adjustment of students in your school. You are requested to respond honestly to all the items in the Questionnaire by filling in the blank spaces. Put a tick **(√)** or **(X)** where appropriate.

Section A: Background information

1. Gender:

    a) Male [ ] Female [ ]

2. Age bracket in years?

    a) Below 15 years [ ]

    b) Between 16 to 18 years [ ]

    c) Above 18 years [ ]

3. How did you join the school?

    a) I was admitted in Form one [ ]

    b) Transferred from another school [ ]

4. Whom do you stay with at home?

    a) Guardian [ ]

    b) One of the parents

    c) Both parent

    d) Others (Specify)…….

5. Is peer victimization experienced in your school? (_Y) (_N)

6. Have other students bullied you while in school? (_Y) (_N)

7. If yes to question 6, what was done to you?

……
……
……

8. Have you ever bullied anyone from your school? (_Y) (_N)

9. If yes to question 8, what did you do to them?

……
……
……

10. Did you report the peer victimization case to the school administration if you have been bullied? (_Y) (_N)

11. What is the common form of peer victimization experienced in your school? (put an X)

    a) Teasing/threats

    b) Physical confrontation

    c) Isolation/exclusion from school activities

    d) Insults

    e) Snatching of personal items such as money, books, foodstuffs

    f) Forced to do duties meant to be done by others

    g) Others (specify)

    ……
    ……
    ……

Section B: Peer-Related Factors

The following statements are on peer-related factors. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A-Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	***Statement***	***SD***	***D***	***UD***	***A***	***SA***
12.	*Students help their friends to overcome the stress resulting from bullying in school.*					
13.	*Students report cases of peer victimization in school to the relevant department for action to be taken.*					
14.	*Peer counselors are well-trained to offer counseling services to students bullied in school.*					
15.	*Student leaders are effective in identifying and reporting students with bullying habits.*					
16.	*Peer counselors are well-trained to assist in providing psychosocial support to affected students.*					
17.	*Students encourage each other to participate in extracurricular activities to enhance socialization.*					
18.	*The peer counselors provide support through group counseling sessions to reduce the impact of bullying in school.*					

19. In your opinion, what are other peer-related factors that can enhance students' psychosocial adjustment in school?

……
……
……

Section C: School-Related Factors

The following are statements on school-related factors. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A-Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	***Statement***	***SD***	***D***	***UD***	***A***	***SA***
20.	*The school has sensitization programs that address the consequences of peer victimization.*					
21.	*Students are encouraged to report any bullying activities within the school.*					
22.	*Students are encouraged to report those students showing withdrawal characteristics.*					
23.	*The school management encourages inclusivity to curb bullying as a result of perceived diversity.*					
24.	*Teachers are friendly and approachable to students and can advise students when sought.*					
25.	*The school administration has created an anti-bullying policy (Suspension or expulsion) to curb bullying practices.*					
26.	*The school management offers counseling to the affected students through the guidance and counseling department.*					
27.	*The school uses Surveillance cameras and teachers on duty to identify and address peer victimization.*					

28. In your opinion, what other school-related factors can enhance students' psychosocial adjustment in school?

……
……
……

Section D: Family-Related Factors

The following are statements on family-related factors. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A-Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	***Statement***	***SD***	***D***	***UD***	***A***	***SA***
29.	*There is sufficient parental involvement in my activities at home which helps me cope with pressure from school.*					
30.	*I have friendly and approachable parents who encourage me to share with them my experiences with friends in school.*					
31.	*Good communication between my parents and me encourages me to share the challenges I face in school.*					
32.	*Interaction sessions between students, parents, and teachers encourage students to raise emerging issues affecting them at school.*					
33.	*Sufficient parental involvement in my well-being encourages me to report bullying activities in schools.*					
34.	*The parental guidance and counseling I receive at home have helped me adjust to the school environment.*					
35.	*My parents can identify and get concerned when I am psychologically stressed or disturbed.*					

36. In your opinion, what are other peer-related factors that can enhance students' psychosocial adjustment in school?

……
……

Section E: Guidance and Counselling

The following are statements on family-related factors. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A-Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	***Statement***	***SD***	***D***	***UD***	***A***	***SA***
37.	*Guidance and counseling department offer sessions for bullied students.*					
38.	*The guidance and counseling teacher have trained peer counselors on how to handle bullying cases.*					
39.	*The department of Guidance and Counselling often meets with students and peer counselors to solve issues affecting students.*					
40.	*The guidance and counseling teacher is friendly and approachable to students.*					
41.	*The department allows personal guidance and counseling sessions for disclosure purposes.*					
42.	*The department can cover the needs of the affected students.*					
43.	*Group and individual counseling are done to support all victims of bullying.*					

44. In your opinion, can the guidance and counseling department solve the bullying issue in school? Please explain.

……
……
……

Section F: Psychosocial Adjustment

The following are statements on the Psychosocial adjustment of the students. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A- Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	***Statement***	***SD***	***D***	***UD***	***A***	***SA***
45.	*I am happy and content with how I carry out school activities.*					
46.	*After counseling by the G/C teacher, my academic performance has improved over the last one year.*					
47.	*After counseling by the G/C teacher, I feel appreciated and acknowledged by my peers in school.*					
48.	*After counseling by the G/C teacher, I don't have trouble controlling my temper.*					
49.	*After counseling by the G/C teacher, I don't feel like hitting someone on a slight provocation.*					
50.	*After counseling by the G/C teacher, I don't feel like leaving school due to too much pressure from friends.*					

51. In which other way has the guidance and counseling department improved psychosocial adjustment in school

……
……
……

52. Briefly explain how peer victimization has affected you

a) Emotionally

……
……
……
……

b) Psychologically

……
……
……
……

c) Physically

……
……
……
……

Appendix III: Questionnaire for the Guidance and Counseling Teachers

This questionnaire seeks to obtain information on peer victimization and psychosocial adjustment of students in the school. You are kindly requested to respond to all items in the questionnaire as honestly as possible. Answer the questions in all the sections by filling in the blank spaces at the end of each question or statement or simply put a tick (√) where appropriate.

Section A: Background information

1. Gender

   a) Male [ ]

   b) Female [ ]

2. What is your age bracket in years?

   a) 18- 24 years [ ]

   b) 25- 31 years [ ]

   c) 32- 38 years [ ]

   d) 39- 45 years [ ]

   e) 46 years and above [ ]

3. What is the highest academic level reached?

   a) Diploma [ ]

   b) Degree [ ]

   c) Masters [ ]

   d) Ph.D. [ ]

   e) Other (specify) ……

4. How many years have you worked as a guidance and counseling teacher in the school?

   a) Below five years [ ]
   b) 6 years to 10 years [ ]
   c) 11 years to 15 years [ ]
   d) 16 years to 20 years [ ]
   e) Above 21 years [ ]

5. What is the type of your school?

a) Sub-county [ ] b) County [ ] c) Extra county [ ]

d) National School [ ]

Section B: Peer-related factors

The following are statements on Peerrelated factors. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A-Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	Statement	SD	D	UD	A	SA
6.	The peer counselors are well trained on how to support and handle bullied students in a professional manner					
7.	There is group counseling sessions where victims of bullying interact with peer counselors.					
8.	The peer counselors provide day(s) within the week to encourage group counseling sessions.					
9.	Interaction between students assists us in identifying and solving emerging bullying issues.					
10.	The peer counselors encourage the student to open up to other students, especially to peer counselors, on cases of bullying in school.					
11.	The school management supports peer counselors in running their clubs and meetings.					

Section C: School-related factors

The following are statements on school-related factors. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A-Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	***Statement***	***SD***	***D***	***UD***	***A***	***SA***
12.	*The school management developed policies with the support of other stakeholders to curb bullying in school.*					
13.	Guidance and counseling teachers *participate in counseling the victim with other departments, especially disciplinary.*					
14.	*The school provides training in guidance and counseling.*					
15.	*The school has enough extra curriculum activities to keep students engaged after class.*					
16.	*The school has enough teachers to supervise the students' activities.*					
17.	*The guidance and counseling department in the school caters for students' psychosocial well-being.*					
18.	*The guidance and counseling department receives and addresses peer victimization cases effectively.*					
19.	*The school has a suggestion box, and students are encouraged to share issues affecting them anonymously.*					

Section D: family related factors

The following are statements on family-related factors. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A-Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	***Statement***	***SD***	***D***	***UD***	***A***	***SA***
20.	*The friendly and approachable parents encourage me to share my experiences with friends in school.*					
21.	*Parents are encouraged to have sufficient parental involvement in their children at home to help them cope with pressure from school.*					
22.	*Interaction sessions between students, parents, and teachers encourage students to raise emerging issues affecting them at school.*					
23.	The counseling department has a session that ensures there is student-parent interaction					
24.	The school has sensitization programs which encourage parents to participate in their child's upbringing					
25.	*Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about the importance of inclusivity and diversity in school.*					

Section E: Guidance and Counselling

The following are statements on guidance and counseling. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A- Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	***Statement***	***SD***	***D***	***UD***	***A***	***SA***
26.	*The guidance and counseling department counsel both bully victims and perpetrators.*					
27.	There are *group counseling sessions to encourage students to open up about issues affecting them in school.*					
28.	*The guidance and counseling department report bullying perpetrators to the disciplinary committee for* disciplinary action					
29.	*The guidance and counseling department follows up on counseled students to ensure they have adjusted to the school environment.*					
30.	*The guidance and counseling department encourages open communication between the students and the department* through the use of suggestion boxes.					
31.	*The guidance and counseling department protects students' identities who report unethical practices among students in school.*					
32.	*A student can reach* counseling department anytime in order to ensure the issues are solved before escalating into a problem					

Section F: Psychosocial Adjustment

The following are statements on the Psychosocial adjustment of the students. Please tick the response which matches your opinion. *Key: SD- Strongly disagree, D- Disagree, UD-undecided, A- Agree, SA- Strongly agree).*

No	***Statement***	***SD***	***D***	***UD***	***A***	***SA***
33.	*Psychosocial adjustment enhances the emotional regulation of the student.*					
34.	*Psychosocial adjustment enhances the adaptability of the student.*					
35.	*Psychosocial adjustment enhances the Problem-solving skills of the student.*					
36.	*Psychosocial adjustment enhances the Self-esteem of the student.*					
37.	*The psychosocial adjustment increases school completion rates.*					
38.	*The psychosocial adjustment increases academic performance.*					

Appendix IV: Interview Schedule for the Deputy Head Teacher

This interview schedule aims to establish the relationship between peer victimization and psychosocial adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Bomet county. The interview is an additional follow-up from the earlier survey using a structured questionnaire administered to the students. Therefore, the interview's main objective is to understand better the various forms of victimization and the major factors influencing the vice. The information provided during this process will be treated confidential.

1. Indicate your gender _____
2. What is the category of your school? _____
3. Are there reported cases of peer victimization in your school? (Y/N)
4. If yes, what are the forms of peer victimization reported

   _____

   _____
5. Have students reported cases of social withdrawal, dropping out of school, or suicidal tendencies (Y/N)
6. Are the above cases (if any) related to peer victimization?
7. If there are reported cases, what actions does the school undertake to remedy the reported cases_____
8. Which programs has the school put in place to sensitize and curb peer victimization

   _____

   _____

9. Is there a group of students prone more to peer victimization than others?(Y/N) Explain

   _____-

   _____

10. How has peer interaction among students assisted in enhancing the psychosocial adjustment of students?

_____-

_____

_____-

_____

11. In your own opinion, has the school supported victims of peer victimization in getting justice? Explain.

_____-

_____

_____-

_____

12. What is the role of the family in enhancing the psychosocial adjustment of victimized student?

_____-

_____

_____-

_____

13. How do guidance and counseling ensure students are socially and psychologically well-adjusted in school?

_____-

_____

_____-

_____

14. Explain how guidance and counseling helped students affected by peer victimization in schools.

_____-

_____

_____-

_____

15. Do students overcome peer victimization?

_____-
_____

_____-
_____

16. Explain other ways bully victims can get a psychosocial adjustment in school.

_____-

_____

_____-

_____

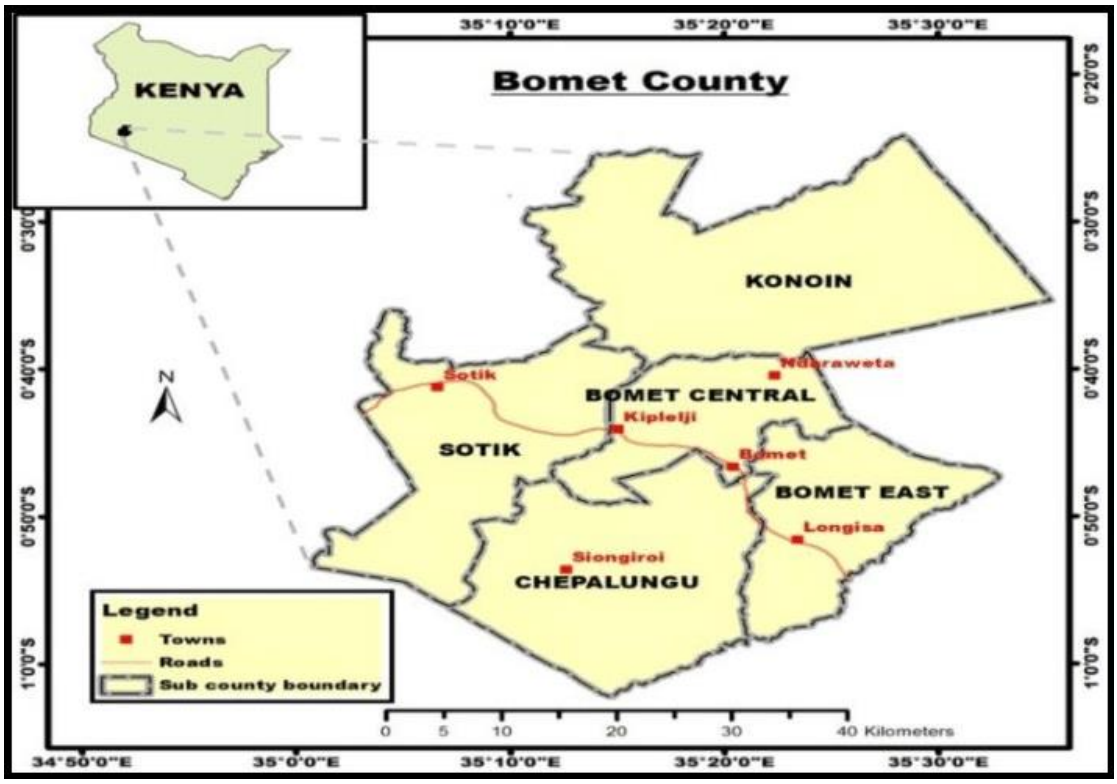
Appendix V: Sample Size Determination

Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population

N	*S*	*N*	*S*	*N*	*S*
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	1000000	384

Note.—*N* is population size.
S is sample size.

Appendix VI: Map Showing the Location of the Study



Source: Geo Maps Kenya (2023)

Appendix VII: Authorization Letter for the Study

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 273590

Date of Issue: 11/August/2023

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