Original Article

An Assessment of Self-Awareness on the Relationship Formation among Students in Public Secondary Schools of Murang'a County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Self-awareness is the first step to personality development and in overcoming personality defects. One key developmental task that helps in the formation of self-awareness during adolescence is the relationship formation with significant others. However, daily forms of human relationships are becoming negatively impacted by changes in culture, parenting styles, globalization, new technologies and institutional changes with consequences in changing family structures, socialization and relations. This study, therefore, endeavours to assess self-awareness on relationship formation among students in public secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya. Descriptive surveys and phenomenological designs were triangulated to provide a cohesive perspective. A mixed methodology paradigm in which qualitative and quantitative data were simultaneously collected was adopted. The target population was 101926 students, 2236 peer counsellors and 292 guidance and counselling teachers. Both random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the research sample. The sample size was 431 participants consisting of 400 students, 21 peer counsellors and 10 guidance and counselling teachers. The data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and focused group discussion guides. Quantitative data was computed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and results were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented in narrative forms. Results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between self-awareness and relationship formation among secondary school students in Murang'a County. The study recommended that the Kenyan government through the Ministry of Education should revise the curriculum to offer compulsory life skills and competencies like self-awareness and interpersonal skills at all levels of education. In addition, parents and teachers encourage students to speak openly about their challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

The interest in self-concept goes back to the ancient Greek thoughts in the seven sages that highlighted the philosophical meaning of the Delphic aphorism "know thy self". Plato believed that man should know himself, understand human nature and estimate with accuracy the purpose to be filled before making any achievement (Filivos 48.C). Consistent with these, Aristotle (Rhetoric, 1395 a.22) in his moral theory highlighted that "know thy self" significantly help a man to determine the balance between deficit and excess in all human endeavors.

During adolescence, self-awareness becomes crucial because it is one of the first steps in creating self-concept. This is a significant part for optimal functioning in the physical, mental and social aspects for adolescents where important people during this time are parents, teachers and peers. In line with these, one of the key developmental tasks during adolescence which is crucial in awareness of the self is relationship formation with significant others. Both processes of self-awareness and relationship formation occur as adolescents strive to develop who they are, separate from parental influence. There may be long-term consequences for an individual who fails to gain individuation at appropriate times (Davis & Mc Quillin ,2021). They have to strike a healthy balance between independence and interdependence. Psychologists have highlighted both individualism and collectivism as two cultural orientations that guide adolescents in this challenge. These dimensions are also important in that they help in shaping the very fabric of our societies, influencing our values, beliefs and social structures. In individualistic cultures, adolescents have a more autonomous self-awareness viewing themselves as independent and self-reliant while in collectivistic cultures, adolescents define self-awareness relative to social relationships with significant others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Individualism traces back to the ancient Greek philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Socrates. These early thinkers stress the importance of reason, individual rights and the pursuit of self-fulfillment. In contrast, collectivism find its foundations in eastern philosophies like Confucianism, which prioritizes the well-being of community over individual desires. This collective identity is central to the definition of self-awareness and interpersonal relationships. The United States is often cited as the epitome of individualistic culture (Potter, 2019). Individualistic ethos emerged from early days of the nation which was reflected in the American constitution, which heavily emphasizes personal freedoms and the pursuit of personal happiness (Rakove et al., 2009). In this culture, self-awareness is built primarily on personal attributes and achievements where wealthy people are idolized (Takano & Osaka, 2018). This has resulted to weak social ties and connections.

This individualistic view was also dominant in the United Kingdom. The root of individualism is the dominant political theory known as liberalism which dominated in the early 19th century. This ideology sought to maximize individual freedom and self-reliance with the assumptions that state actions was negatively affecting freedom (Collini, 1979). In turn this has shaped self-awareness in term of personal autonomy with weak relationship ties. Typical characterization of adolescence in

these individualistic cultures include increased individuation from parents, orientations towards peers, emotionality and risk-taking in line with individualistic emphasis on independence, personal autonomy and individuality.

Collectivism is deeply rooted in many eastern cultures like those found in East Asia. These suggest that the formation of self-awareness is based on the "we" aspect rather than "I". This collectivism is deeply rooted in philosophies like Confucianism which had greatly stressed maintaining harmonious relationships in these societies. For instance, in China, there are many empathy sayings in Confucian culture (Li et al., 2017) which illustrate the beliefs of group cohesiveness and importance of group relations to individual's self-awareness and descriptions. This collective identity is central to social interactions and the decision-making process. Similarly, in Japan, and South Korea, collectivism is ingrained in social structures and norms where loyalty to family members and friends is highly valued over individual.

In Africa, many nations seem to have collectivist cultures, which have the origin in the African tradition of "*Ubuntu*". This is a concept in which one's sense of self is shaped by relationships with others*.* This concept is the bedrock of sound human relations and morality of traditional African life. The concept of "*Ubuntu*" has been used in different people across Africa to express the collectivism in African societies like Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Congo and Angola (Louw, 2001). For instance, in Zambia the most important thing is probably devotion to "belonging" where the emphasis is on family relationships and individual subservice to the family and community. In Tanzania, collectivism has roots in "ujamaa" communism advocated by the late *Mwalimu* Nyerere ((Nyerere, 1968). He described "ujamaa" as the basis of African socialism meaning people-centeredness. This required the system to incorporate African communitarian ethos and relationships.

Kenya is highly collectivist where relationships tend to be highly valued. In addition, many Kenyans identify with their ethnic groups, language and cultural practices. This shared identity contributes to their relational self-awareness. Interestingly, among the youth, self-conception leans toward individualism whereas, among the elderly, self-concept is viewed as collective and moralistic orientation (Mpofu, 2010). In Murang'a County, relationships with peers, parents and teachers directly impact a variety of health issues like drug and substance abuse, alcoholism, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancies among others (NCPD, 2017; NAYS, 2015). This continues to impact on self-conception among adolescents. To this end, the researchers assess self-awareness on relationship formation among students in secondary schools in Murang'a county, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on self-awareness is characterized by multiple definitions (Sutton, 2016) and rarely does the literature recognize the complexity of the construct (Sutton et al., 2015). Furthermore, the definition offered appears to depend on research and context (Sutton, 2016). The absence of clarity in this construct is problematic and is hindering theorizing on how self-awareness should be understood and assessed. In order contribute to the systematic literature review, there is need to understand the term self-awareness and its various aspects that impact on relationship formation.

First, self-awareness is contextualized within the recognition of one's thoughts and feelings in relations to others (Greenberg et al., 2017; Sutton, 2016). In a similar study on how social contextual factors influence depression and suicidal ideations among adolescents in Estonia, a sample size of 723 adolescents (383 boys=53%, 342 girls=47%) was used. The study addressed the prevalence of suicidal ideations and feelings of depression among 11-, 13- and 15-year-old adolescents in association with their context. The findings revealed that for those adolescents with parents, suicidal ideations occurred more frequently among 11-year-olds (23%) relative to 13-year-olds (11.4%) and 15-year-olds (13.5%). The rate of depression increases with age for both boys and

girls with boys ranging between 15.8% and girls ranging at 29.0 % (Samm et al., 2010). Further, the results showed a positive relationship between both suicidal ideations and depressive feelings on health complaints gender and family relations.

Secondly, self-awareness is conceptualized as an aspect of motivation. In this aspect, self-awareness provides the foundation for building a strong sense of purpose and direction, which propels us forward even when faced with challenges. Research findings have revealed that the goals students adopt, their relative importance and their effects on motivation and achievement are related to the influence of others. Martin et al. (2009) found that relationships with teachers affected students' mastery and avoidance goals. This suggests that the goals students adopt, and the way these goals are expressed, are not independent of the influence of the relationship students have with teachers, peers, and parents. For this reason, students' goals can be conceptualized as both arising from and being fulfilled in a relational context.

Another aspect of self-awareness is emotional intelligence. This term encompasses the capacity to be aware of, control and express an individual's emotions while at the same time handling interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically (Anjum & Swathi, 2017). An empirical study was carried out to assess the effect of emotional intelligence on academic performance while examining the possible mediating role of flourishing and the moderating role of teacher-student relationships. A convenience sample of 283 adolescents (49.8 % =Females) aged 12-18 years (M=14.42, SD=1.12), participated in a cross-sectional study by completing self-report questionnaires measuring emotional intelligence, flourishing and teacher-student relationship (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021).

Results indicated that flourishing completing mediated the path from emotional intelligence to academic performance and that teacher-student was a significant moderator in this model. Thus, for adolescents with poor teacher-student relationships, the association of emotional intelligence and flourishing was positively associated with academic performance. These results suggest that it is crucial to foster better teacher-student relationships, especially in adolescents with low intelligence. In addition, research by Rey et al. (2019) highlights that developing emotional competencies may be a useful resource to increase the levels of flourishing and improve psychological adjustment and interpersonal relationships among adolescents. Plausible explanation for this significant link is that emotional intelligence moderately helps students to manage emotions associated with educational settings and this set of abilities also helps by improving the relationships with peers and teachers (Mac Cann et al., 2020).

THEORETICAL LITERATURE

Self-perception theory

The theory posits that individuals determine their preferences and attitudes by interpreting the meaning of their behaviours (Bem, 1972). Self-perception is a component of emotional intelligence that includes attention to feelings, clarity of feelings and mood repairs. This theory informs the study in that self-perception is the interpretation of oneself based on one's self-awareness. Students can only perceive the things that they are aware. This notion helps students to accept the difficulties they may face during their adolescence instead of giving up. This suggests that students in secondary schools can adopt positive attitudes, emotions, and values that are important if the policymakers can formulate positive and appropriate policies that teachers can effectively implement to make students perform the right actions and positive behaviours. This will help the Kenyan government and other policymakers to realize Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Vision 2030 as well as Education for Sustainable Development (EFA).

Attachment Theory

The study also adopted attachment theory. The theory suggests that early relationships with primary caregivers (parents) act as a base for

interacting with other members of society (Bowlby, 1969). This theory is relevant to this study because as adolescents strive to maintain parental connections and explore new social roles with peers, positive transition to adulthood as well as autonomy is better enhanced by both emotional connectedness and secure attachment with primary caregivers. According to attachment theory, the earliest bonds between children and caregivers have a profound and lasting impact on children's development, shaping their relationships and well-being throughout their lives. Therefore, by prioritizing attachment, stakeholders are laying the foundations for healthy relationships and positive outcomes for the students as future citizens.

Erik Erickson's Psychosocial Theory

The researcher also intends to use Erik Erickson's psycho-social theory. Specifically, the researcher has aligned the Identity versus role confusion stage of Erickson's psychosocial theory where adolescents search for their personal identities and a sense of exploration of beliefs, values and personal goals. This theory informs this study because it is during adolescence that the achievement of a sense of identity becomes crucial to lay the foundations for subsequent personality development. Successive completion of this stage leads to the formation of a strong sense of self that remains throughout life and provides a sense of direction in interpersonal relationships with more positive outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed methodology research paradigm where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently was adopted in the study. This paradigm ensured that the data obtained from each method was used to complement one another. This gave the research more value in terms of relevance, dependability, validity and reliability. The researcher adopted descriptive surveys and phenomenological research designs in the study. Descriptive survey designs were used to analyze quantitative data while a phenomenological design was used to analyze qualitative data. Quantitative data were computed

with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26, and results were analyzed using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented in narrative form. The data collected from both designs were merged to give a common interpretation of the study.

Murang'a County had 292 public secondary schools with a student population of 101926 students. From each school, the head of the Guidance and Counseling Department was purposely selected to participate in interviews. This gave a target population of 292 teachers. In addition, 2296 peer counsellors were targeted for participating in Focused Group Discussions. From the target population, 400 students were randomly sampled for quantitative data while 10 counseling teachers and 21 peer counselors were purposely selected for qualitative data. The composition of participants entailed 400 students, 10 teachers and 21 peer counsellors.

Both interactive and non-interactive methods were used in data collection. In interactive inquiry, the researcher engaged respondents face-to-face through interviews and Focused Group Discussions. In a non-interactive method, self-administered questionnaires were dispersed to the concerned participants by the researcher and research assistant to provide the required data. The content validity of questionnaires was established through expert judgement by the supervisors and research specialists while the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to establish construct validity. The actual value obtained was +0.67 and interpreted as a good value. I. The reliability of questionnaires was assessed using the Cronbach alpha technique whereby a reliability coefficient of + 0.84 was obtained. This was interpreted as a high value and therefore instruments were regarded as highly reliable. The credibility of the qualitative data was ensured through the use of triangulation of both interviews and focus group discussions. Dependability was also ensured through the use of standard methods in data collection, presentations and interpretations of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the findings consisted of three levels of data analysis. These levels include descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and thematic analysis. Further, there was the mixing and the interpretation of the collected data which was analyzed from these levels in an attempt to understand the research problem better.

Descriptive Statistics Analysis of the Assessment of Self-Awareness on Relationship Formation Among Secondary School Students

In this case, the researcher analyzed quantitative data collected from students' questionnaires by use of descriptive statistics. These questionnaires comprised items that required the students to rate the level of agreement on a Likert scale comprising of 5-points. This measure used a range of 1-5 with (1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-undecided, 4-Disagree and 5-Strongly Disagree). This analysis used frequency tables, percentages, means, modes and medians. The data captured the indicators of self-awareness, such as motivation, thoughts & feelings and emotions. The data also captured the dependent variable which was relationship formation. This was evident in the questionnaires whose research questions balanced both independent and dependent variables. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Items of Students' Level of Self-Awareness

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided	Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F %	F	%	F %		N	%
I	222	55.5	165	41.3	7 1.8	4	1.0	2	0.5	400	100
II	189	47.3	85	21.3	25 6.3	67	16.8	33	8.3	400	100
III	247	61.8	123	30.8	12 3.0	11	2.8	7	1.8	400	100
IV	183	45.8	160	40.0	20 5.0	23	5.8	14	3.5	400	100
V	29	32.3	130	32.5	33 8.3	68	17	40	10	400	100
VI	198	49.5	150	37.5	19 4.8	21	5.3	11	2.8	400	100
VII	97	24.3	114	28.5	32 8.0	108	27.0	48	12	400	100
VIII	120	30	128	32	28 7.0	84	21.0	40	10	400	100
IX	272	68.0	110	27.5	6 1.5	9	2.3	3	0.8	400	100
AVERAGE	**184**	**46**	**130**	**32.5**	**20 5.0**	**44**	**11.0**	**22**	**5.5**	**400**	**100**

Source: Research data 2024

KEY

F   Frequency
%   Percentages
I   I am aware of my personal goal I want to pursue in life
II   I am not sure about the choice of my career in the future
III   I am aware of what I like and dislike in life
IV   I always examine my feelings and then decide what to do
V   I don't often think about my feelings
VI   I am usually aware of my emotions
VII   At times, I fail to understand my emotions sometimes
VIII I feel less motivated to work hard in school
IX   I work hard to achieve things that I value most as a student

From the table, it can be observed that on the awareness of personal goals, 55.5 % strongly agreed, 41.3 % agreed, 1.8 % undecided, 1.0 % disagreed and 0.5 % strongly disagreed. On being unsure about career, 47.5 % strongly agreed, 21.3 % agreed, 6.3 Undecided, 16.8 % disagreed and 8.3% strongly disagreed. On the awareness of likes/dislikes, 61.8 % strongly agreed, 30.8 % Agreed, 3.0 Undecided, 2.8 Disagreed and 1.8 strongly disagreed. On examination of feelings, 45.8 % strongly agreed, 40.0 % Agreed, 5.0 % Undecided, 5.8 % Disagreed and 3.5 % strongly

disagreed. On not often thinking about feelings, 32.3 % strongly agreed, 32.5 % Agreed, 8.3 % Undecided, 17.0 % Disagreed and 10.0 % strongly disagreed. On failing to understand emotions, 49.5% strongly agreed, 37.5 % agreed, 4.8 % Undecided, 5.3 % Disagreed and 2.8 % strongly disagreed. On low motivation, 30 % strongly agreed, 32 % agreed, 7.0 % Undecided, 21.0 %

Disagreed and 10 % strongly disagreed. Finally, on hard work, 68.0 % strongly agreed, 27.5 % Agreed, 1.5 % Undecided, 2.3 % Disagreed and 0.8 % strongly disagreed.

Further quantitative analysis of self-awareness using the measures of central tendencies revealed useful information presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Measures of Central Tendencies for Self-Awareness Among Students

Item	Mean	Median	Mode	Total
I am aware of my personal goal I want to pursue in life	1.49	1.00	1	595
I am not sure about the choice of my career in future	2.21	2.00	1	682
I am aware of what I like and dislike in life	1.50	1.00	1	599
I always examine my feelings and then decide what to do	1.82	2.00	1	726
I don't often think about my feelings	2.36	2.00	2	942
I am usually aware of my emotions	1.78	2.00	1	711
At times, I fail to understand my emotions	2.82	2.00	2	1126
Sometimes I feel less motivated to work hard in school	2.63	2.00	2	1053
I work hard to achieve things that I value most as a student	1.46	1.00	1	583
TOTAL	**18.07**			**7017**

Source: Research Data 2024

$$\text{Actual mean} = \frac{7017}{3599} = 1.949$$

Table 2 shows that the three measures of central tendencies gave values that range from 1 to 2. These measures are mean (1.949), median (1-2) and the mode (1-2). These values represent a high level of self-awareness among students in Murang'a County. The mean value of 1.949 suggests that on average, the majority of students reported high levels of self-awareness in aspects of emotions, motivations, thoughts and emotions in relation to interpersonal relationships with significant others. In addition, a median value

ranging from 1 to 2 suggests that even if the data had extreme values, the level of self-awareness for most students is relatively high. This is further affirmed by the mode which suggests that the majority of the respondents reported high level of self-awareness relative to relationship formation. The high self-awareness is essential because self-awareness forms the foundations for competencies such as empathy and understanding. These competencies become tools for enhancing relationships. Further quantitative analysis of the measure of central tendencies classified the levels of self-awareness using the category given in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequencies Representing Levels of Self-Awareness

Level of Self-Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
High	346	86.5
Medium	49	12.25
Low	5	1.25

Source: Researcher 2024

From Table 3 presented, a relatively large percentage of the respondents (86.5 %) reported high self-awareness level. About 12.25 % reported medium level of self-awareness level while about 1.25 % reported low self-awareness. High levels of self-awareness had been associated

with the management of anger (Mohammadiary, Sarabi & Shirazi, 2012), management of suicidal thoughts (Khadivi, Moezi, Shakeri, & Taghrborjeian, 2005), better mental health (Ghaffari & Ahad, 2007), and building both effective and desirable relationships (Davari,

Tafakori & Kazemi, 2006). This high level of self-awareness among secondary school students is a pointer to the valuable potential for self-growth and positive development during this difficult period of differentiation and reorganization in self-conceptions. These results concur with the findings by Huynh (2017) whose findings showed that self-awareness among students was fairly well indicating that students were aware of themselves.

Inferential Statistics in Students' Self-Awareness on Relationship Formation

The researcher began analyzing quantitative data at the level of inferential statistics using independent samples t-tests to compare the means of boys and girls in measures of self-awareness on relationship formation. The consideration of gender in assessing self-awareness was necessitated by the fact that both girls and boys approach the evaluation of their self-awareness differently. In particular, females tend to be stuck in negative stereotypes such as the tendency to be good at domestic chores like cooking and cleaning. On the other hand, males tend to be stuck to positive gender stereotypes such as the tendency to perceive one as a born leader. These stereotypes alter the adolescents' self-image and eventually their self-awareness. Results of the t-test were illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Independent Samples T-test For Comparison of Means in the Levels of Self-Awareness Across Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std	F	t	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	St. error diff
Self-Awareness	Male	204	2.0572	.67442	.264	2.261	396	.171	.04936
	female	196	1.9206	.52123		2.272	380.693	.172	.04936

Source: Research data 2024

The t-test results in Table 4 showed insignificant gender differences in the level of self-awareness. The results showed that the sig (2-tailed) p-value was .171 which was greater than .05. Further, the mean for boys was 2.0572 while girls reported 1.9206. This implies that the level of self-awareness among girls was relatively higher than boys. It means that the girl child seems to have more awareness in the personal aspects compared to the boy child in Murang'a county. The findings concurred with other studies by Patel (2017) and Pomerantz et al. (2002) where girls reported relatively high emotional intelligence and motivation respectively. However, these findings contradict the results from both studies by Lahav et al., (2014) and Eurich (2017) where gender differences existed in self-awareness but in the opposite direction.

Further, a chi-square test of association was conducted to investigate whether a relationship existed between self-awareness and relationship formation. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test of Association Between Self-Awareness and Relationship Formation Among Students

Chi-Square test			
	Value	df	Asymp. Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	51.737[a]	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	51.955	16	.000
Linear by Linear Association	27.151	1	.000
No of Valid Cases	400		

Source: Research Data 2024

Table 5 shows the results of the chi-square test of association with an alpha value of .05 to assess whether Self-awareness level was related to Relationship formation. The results were found to be statistically significant with X^2 (1, N=400) =51.737 [a], P=.000. Further inquiry to investigate the strength of the association between self-awareness and relationship formation was done

and interpreted based on Cohen's standards where coefficients of above .50 indicate a large effect size, .30 to .49 represent a moderate effect size and coefficients of below .30 represents a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The results of the correlation were also assessed at an alpha value of .050 and presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Symmetric Measures for Self-Awareness on Relationship Formation Among Students

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.413	.000
	Cramer's V	.238	.000
N of Valid Cases		400	

Source: Research Data 2024

Table 6 revealed that the φ coefficient was .413. This revealed a moderate association between self-awareness and relationship formation. This suggests that an awareness of how one will network with significant others in life is a critical life skill during adolescence and that there should be a concerted effort by all stakeholders to inculcate positive life skills and values. The findings were in agreement with the findings from another study by Buckingham (2008) in which there was a strong connection between self-awareness and interpersonal relationships. These findings highlighted the significance of self-awareness in helping an individual in developing positive self-regulation and further establish healthy and positive relationships (Erden, 2015).

The study further used a linear regression analysis to explain the relationship between self-awareness and relationship formation. Results are illustrated as shown in the following table.

Table 7: Model Summary for Linear Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.337	.113	.111	0.72575

Source: Research Data 2024

A regression model was conducted to test the relationship between Self-Awareness and Relationship Formation. The results indicated that R=0.337 And R^2=.113. R indicates moderate relationship between the variables and R^2 indicates that 11.3 % of the variation in the relationship formation is explained by changes in self-awareness while 88.7 % of the variation in the relationship formation is unexplained by self-awareness.

Table 8: Anova Results for Linear Regression Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	sig
1	Regression	26.802	1	26.802	50.887	.000
	Residual	209.629	398	.527		
	Total	236.431	399			

Source: Research Data 2024

The findings of the Anova revealed F-Statistics of 50.887 with a p-value of 0.000 which was less than the significance level of 0.005. The study hence concluded that the model used to link self-awareness to relationship formation had good fitness.

Table 9 Coefficients Results for Linear Regression Analysis

	B	Std Error	Beta	t	sig
(Constant)	1.369	.140		9.801	.000
Self-Awareness	.480	.067	.337	7.133	.000

   a. Dependent Variable Relationship Formation

In the model, the coefficient of self-awareness was B=0.480 Which was significantly different from 0 with p-value=0.000 which was less than .05. This revealed a significant positive relationship between self-awareness and relationship formation among students in public secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya.

Thematic Analysis of Students' Level of Self-Awareness on Relationship Formation

The researcher prepared and organized the data obtained from both the interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews were used on the heads of departments in guidance & counselling while the peer counsellors participated in focused group discussions. After the preparations and organization of the qualitative data, the data was summarized in narratives and verbatim citations as seen below. According to the Guidance and counselling teachers, there is need for a concerted effort in assisting students to raise their self-awareness levels. This would eventually aid in the recognition of the self as an important person as one of the teachers put it:

> *"Supporting students in raising their level of self-awareness may lead to deeper reflection on the self as being multiple. This, in turn, may lead to the recognition of more than one's self among others. Students build their own self-awareness through expressing what they want to pursue in life as well as being aware of their emotions. It is also notable that students work hard to achieve things that they value most especially in particular subject areas. Once a student learns the need to be good at a given subject to qualify for entry in a certain career, they tend to work harder in those subjects"* [KI 02]

Motivation among students is not only crucial in its own right, but it is equally important in predicting both learning and achievement in other tasks including interpersonal relationships. This driving force is largely impacted by classroom teachers and is mostly focused on academic subject matters as one group reported:

> *"As we study and focus on achieving our academic goals, we appreciate the advice of our teachers and even mentors who come to school to talk to us. We pursue and study harder in the subjects that we are required for our desired career areas. We focus much on sciences when we are told that studying medicine and surgery calls for good grades in sciences. Similarly, we focus much on languages as we are advised that they form the basis of communication in all careers"* [FGD 01]

The major conclusion from the inquiry is that majority of the respondents had a high level of motivation. Further contribution by the guidance and counseling teachers confirmed the same assertions by highlighting the motivation to perform tasks in school activities especially where the issue of rewards is concerned as one teacher posited

> *"Well, to some extent the students are well motivated in what they do. For example, I can say that we have the cleaning of the classroom which is a task to be performed by all students. In this, there is a reward for the class that cleans their classroom faster than all other classes. We, as teachers have witnessed stiff competition among the classes as students try to do better than others and obtain the reward. This, in my own view, shows the motivation to achieve"* [KI 04]

Students' relationships serve as important contexts for developing and refining interpersonal competencies, one of which is managing one's thoughts and feelings during interactions with significant others. These thoughts and feelings influence our choices, behaviours and outcomes in events and situations. According to peer counsellors, a number of students can express their feelings rationally while some find it difficult to do so, and find them seeking help as one group reported

> *"Ok, some students, I can say a good number kind act after carefully thinking on the matter. As such they express their feelings well but there are some who fear to act, they really*

come to consult teachers when the need arises." [FGD 03]

According to the guidance and counselling teachers, students' way of expressing thoughts and feelings can be put into two categories as one teacher puts it.

"Well, you know we have two categories, those who act before thinking and those who think before acting. Some indeed find themselves regretting their actions because of acting before thinking. This is shown by some of them writing apology letters and sometimes apologizing in assemblies and this has helped some to acquire the right skills." [KI 05]

During adolescence, individuals re-examine their identity and try to figure out who they are. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role during this stage where one gains the ability to understand and manage the emotions of individual and those of others. According to the interviewees, there is some evidence students have a clear awareness of their emotions as one teacher posited

"Well, majority of the students are well aware of their emotions, they are able to control their emotions and feelings especially because there are rules and regulations that highlights to them how they should express their feelings and thinking and to a large extent, to work positively." [FGD 03]

These findings from the thematic analysis were in agreement with the basis of attachment theory by Bowlby (1969). Attachment theory has the idea that young persons need to form a relationship with a primary caregiver for optimal functioning both socially and emotionally. Thus, by encouraging students to develop self-awareness from a compassionate view, they can be assisted to develop a more positive model of the self, in which they can learn to be more open to acceptance and support from significant others.

Mixing and interpreting data in students' level of self-awareness on relationship formations

The data was mixed and interpreted from the analysis at descriptive, inferential and thematic levels. From descriptive analysis, most students (86.5 %) reported high self-awareness, 12.25 % reported medium self-awareness and about 1.25 % reported low levels of self-awareness. From the inferential statistics, the independent samples t-test analysis revealed that girls reported statistically insignificant higher levels of self-awareness (mean=1.9206) than boys (mean=2.0572). Further, the chi-square test of association revealed a moderate and positively significant association between the two variables with X^2 (1, N=400) =51.73, P=.000, and φ coefficient of .413.

From thematic analysis, students reported having better ways to express their thoughts and feelings, better emotional intelligence and higher motivation in secondary schools. The findings concur with a study by Landline (2013) in which students reported relatively high awareness levels of information regarding occupations and careers. In addition, Wasylow et al. (2018) found that both boys and girls had similar needs for career information. The researcher therefore concluded that self-awareness is significantly associated with relationship formation among secondary school students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

From the findings, the majority of the students (86.5 %) reported high self-awareness. This was reflected in emotions, motivations, thoughts and feelings dimensions of self-awareness. This suggests that students have foundations for important competencies necessary in forming relationships with significant others. In addition, the findings revealed an insignificant gender difference in self-awareness. Finally, the study found a moderate association between self-awareness and relationship formation among students in public secondary schools in Murang'a County.

Recommendation

The study established that self-awareness is positively and significantly associated with

relationship formation among secondary school students in Kenya. In realization of this, the study made the following recommendations

- The Ministry of Education through its various agencies should prioritise raising students' level of self-awareness.

- The curriculum developers to develop curriculum that teaches skills like self-awareness and interpersonal skills

- Teachers and Parents to help students identify their talents and henceforth work hard to realize their dreams

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