



Evaluating the Influence of Interpersonal Skills on Academic Performance of Junior Secondary School Students in Kakamega South Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: Kenya's Competency-Based Education (CBE) integrates interpersonal skills as a tenet of Life Skills Education (LSE) to promote holistic development, yet junior secondary learners in Kakamega South Sub-County show persistently low academic performance, with only 42% achieving above-average. This gap highlights a disconnect between the CBE goals and outcomes, prompting an investigation into how interpersonal skills influence academic achievement. The study examined the influence of interpersonal skills on the academic performance of junior secondary learners in Kakamega South Sub-County, Kenya. The aim was to evaluate the influence of interpersonal skills on academic performance. The study relied on the Self-Determination Theory. A correlational study design was employed, targeting public junior secondary learners in Kakamega South, with a sample of 355 participants selected via stratified random methods. Questionnaires were used as instruments of data collection. A pilot study was done in Kakamega East. Construct validity was ascertained using expert review, and the study achieved an overall reliability of 0.91 (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$). Pearson coefficient and multiple linear regression were used to analyze data. On testing the null hypothesis that interpersonal skills have no significant effect on academic performance, the results indicated that interpersonal skills were a significant predictor of academic performance ($F=3.323, p=0.007$), which led to rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concluded that interpersonal skills significantly enhance academic performance, supporting LSE's role in CBE. The study suggests intensified teacher training, interactive activities, and emotional support resources. Findings inform policymakers and educators on strengthening holistic education for improved outcomes.

Keywords: Interpersonal Skills, Academic Achievement, Competency-Based Education, and Junior Secondary Learners

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1. Introduction

Interpersonal skills, encompassing abilities such as communication, collaboration, empathy, and conflict resolution, constitute a core component of Life Skills Education (LSE) within Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). These skills enable learners to interact positively with peers, teachers, and the broader school community, thereby fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment. Through group

activities, discussions, and collaborative problem-solving embedded in the CBC framework, learners develop the capacity to navigate social interactions effectively, which is essential for holistic development and academic success (WHO, 2020). In the context of junior secondary education in Kakamega South Sub-County, where learners face various socio-economic and academic challenges, strong interpersonal skills can significantly enhance classroom engagement and collective learning outcomes.

Globally, education systems have recognized the pivotal role of interpersonal skills in promoting academic performance. In Japan, for instance, interpersonal skill development is deeply integrated into school activities through programs such as “seikatsu” (daily life education), which emphasize group harmony, respect for others, and collective responsibility. These culturally embedded practices encourage collaboration, peer teaching, and shared responsibilities, leading to improved academic understanding and a cooperative learning environment that supports both individual and collective achievements (Nishino & Watanabe, 2021). Such approaches demonstrate how intentional cultivation of interpersonal competencies contributes to enhanced student motivation, confidence, and overall school performance.

Empirical evidence consistently links well-developed interpersonal skills to improved academic outcomes. Learners with strong interpersonal abilities are better equipped to participate in group assignments, engage in class discussions, seek academic support when needed, and resolve conflicts constructively, all of which create a more conducive learning environment (Taylor et al., 2017; Greenberg et al., 2016). These skills reduce behavioral issues and enhance social dynamics in the classroom, ultimately contributing to higher academic engagement and achievement. In developing countries, including Kenya, where CBC seeks to promote holistic education, interpersonal skills serve as critical bridges between social competence and cognitive performance (Jones & Bouffard, 2016).

Despite the recognized importance of interpersonal skills, gaps persist in their integration and impact within Kenya’s junior secondary schools. While the CBC framework emphasizes collaborative learning and social competencies, implementation challenges such as resource constraints, varying teacher capacities, and inconsistent delivery across schools limit the full realization of these skills’ potential in Kakamega South Sub-County (Ministry of Education, 2023). This disconnect highlights the need for localized empirical investigation into how interpersonal skills specifically influence academic performance among junior secondary learners in this context, particularly given the observed low academic achievement rates in the sub-county.

The present study, therefore, evaluates the influence of interpersonal skills on the academic performance of junior secondary school learners in Kakamega South Sub-County. Guided by Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which underscores the importance of relatedness for intrinsic motivation and engagement, this investigation examines key indicators, including cooperation in group activities, frequency of peer discussion, conflict resolution, and comfort with seeking academic help. By addressing this focus area, the study contributes to understanding how

strengthening interpersonal competencies within the CBC can help bridge the gap between policy intentions and improved educational outcomes in resource-constrained settings.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the integration of Life Skills Education (LSE) into Kenya’s Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), junior secondary school learners in Kakamega South Sub-County continue to record persistently low academic performance, with only 42% achieving above-average scores (Ministry of Education, 2023). Although interpersonal skills such as cooperation, peer collaboration, conflict resolution, and help-seeking are emphasized in the curriculum to foster a supportive learning environment, there is limited empirical evidence on their specific influence on academic achievement in this context. This gap hinders educators and policymakers from effectively leveraging interpersonal skills to address the disconnect between CBC intentions and actual learning outcomes among junior secondary learners in Kakamega South Sub-County.

1.2 Aim of the Study

This study aimed to evaluate the influence of interpersonal skills on the academic performance of junior secondary school learners in Kakamega South Sub-County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Deci and Ryan (1985). SDT posits that human motivation and optimal functioning are driven by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the context of education, particularly within Kenya’s Competency-Based Curriculum, SDT provides a robust lens for understanding how life skills, including interpersonal skills, enhance learners’ intrinsic motivation, engagement, and academic performance. The theory emphasizes that when these psychological needs are satisfied, learners become more self-determined, persistent, and effective in their academic pursuits (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Relatedness, the need to feel connected, supported, and belonging to a social group, directly informs the study’s focus on interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills, such as cooperation with classmates, peer discussion, conflict resolution, and comfort in seeking academic help, facilitate the satisfaction of the relatedness need by enabling positive social interactions and collaborative learning environments. According to SDT, when learners experience strong relatedness through effective

interpersonal competencies, they develop greater intrinsic motivation, emotional security, and willingness to engage in academic tasks. This study, therefore, examines how interpersonal skills fulfill the need for relatedness, thereby predicting improved academic performance among junior secondary school learners in Kakamega South Sub-County (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

2.2 Empirical Review

Interpersonal skills, which encompass communication, collaboration, empathy, and conflict resolution, are essential life skills with a substantial influence on students' academic and social success. Empirical studies indicate that students who cultivate interpersonal skills tend to experience higher levels of academic engagement and performance due to improved social interactions and classroom dynamics (Greenberg et al., 2016; Mahoney et al., 2018). These skills enable students to participate effectively in group assignments, communicate their thoughts clearly, and form meaningful connections with peers and teachers, which fosters a supportive learning environment (Jones & Bouffard, 2016). Despite their significance, the role of interpersonal skills in academic performance, especially in junior secondary schools, is not well-explored. Current literature often highlights the overall benefits of interpersonal skills for students' social development, but specific effects on academic achievement remain insufficiently studied, creating a gap that this study sought to address.

Research demonstrates that students with well-developed interpersonal skills exhibit greater resilience, adaptability, and self-regulation, which are essential for coping with academic challenges (Taylor et al., 2017). For instance, students with strong interpersonal skills are more likely to seek academic support, collaborate on assignments, and handle feedback constructively, all of which contribute to better academic outcomes (Payton et al., 2016). However, much of this research has focused on younger children or college students, with limited data on junior secondary school students in diverse educational settings. Thus, this study addressed the sample gap by focusing on junior secondary school learners in Kakamega South Sub-County, providing contextually relevant insights that could inform educational practices in Kenya.

The integration of interpersonal skills into life skills education programs has been shown to positively influence both social behavior and academic engagement (Zins & Elias, 2016). A review of empirical studies highlights the importance of interpersonal skills in creating inclusive classrooms where students feel a sense of belonging and are encouraged to engage more actively in academic tasks (Durlak et al., 2016). While studies underscore the value of such skills within life skills education, there is limited empirical evidence connecting specific life skills training

with academic performance metrics, particularly in the context of junior secondary education. This current study sought to fill this design gap by examining how life skills education programs targeting interpersonal skills directly influence students' academic performance outcomes in a CBE-aligned curriculum.

Empirical studies further suggest that the development of interpersonal skills depends significantly on the learning environment and teacher-student interactions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2018). Teachers who model interpersonal skills, such as active listening and empathy, promote a classroom culture that values respect, cooperation, and mutual understanding, which are conducive to learning. Nonetheless, research often overlooks how teachers in Kenyan schools foster interpersonal skills in junior secondary learners, and there is limited understanding of how these skills are integrated within the CBE framework. An examination of teacher practices in Kakamega South Sub-County addressed the contextual gap, offering insights into local educational practices and their effectiveness in building interpersonal skills that support academic success.

The literature indicates that interpersonal skills are often measured qualitatively, using observational or self-report methods, which may not provide a comprehensive picture of their impact on academic performance (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). Quantitative data on the academic impact of interpersonal skills are limited, leaving a methodological gap in assessing these skills' effects on measurable academic outcomes. This study incorporated quantitative assessments to capture the full scope of how interpersonal skills influence academic achievement, providing a more robust evaluation framework that could inform future research and practice in life skills education.

There is a scarcity of research that considers the interaction between interpersonal skills and other life skills, such as decision-making and emotional regulation, in supporting academic success (Domitrovich et al., 2017). Interpersonal skills often work in tandem with these other competencies, creating a compound effect that can enhance overall academic performance. However, few studies have examined this relationship within the CBE framework. This study sought to clarify how interpersonal skills interact with other life skills, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how life skills education influences academic performance.

The existing literature on interpersonal skills largely focuses on Western educational systems and has limited applicability to African contexts, particularly to the CBE-aligned curricula used in Kenya (Nasreen & Alam, 2023). Educational values, communication norms, and cultural influences can vary significantly, meaning findings from

Western contexts may not accurately reflect the experiences of students in Kenyan junior secondary schools. Addressing this cultural and contextual gap, this study examined how interpersonal skills development affects academic performance among Kenyan students, thereby providing insights that are directly relevant to the CBE framework and Kenyan educational policy.

3. Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional correlational research design to examine the influence of interpersonal skills on academic performance among junior secondary school learners in Kakamega South Sub-County, Kenya. The target population comprised all public junior secondary school learners (Grades 7 and 8) in the sub-county, estimated at 7,700 learners across 77 schools. A sample of 368 learners was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula and selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire focusing on interpersonal skills indicators such as cooperation in group activities, peer discussion frequency, conflict resolution, and comfort in seeking academic help, alongside academic performance records.

The instrument was piloted in Kakamega East Sub-County to establish validity and reliability. Content and construct validity were ascertained through expert review by supervisors, while reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81 for the interpersonal skills scale and an overall instrument reliability of 0.91. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficients to establish relationships and multiple linear regression to determine the predictive influence of interpersonal skills on academic performance, controlling for demographic variables. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining approvals from the Masinde Muliro University Institutional Ethics Review Committee, NACOSTI, and county education authorities. Informed consent was secured from participants, with assurances of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and anonymity.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Pre-analysis Diagnostic test

Before the process of analysis, the normality test was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test for interpersonal skills indicators and academic performance. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1: Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality for Interpersonal Skills Indicators and Academic Performance

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk Statistic (W)	p-value	Interpretation
Cooperation in Group Activities	0.996	0.537	Normal ($p > 0.05$)
Peer Discussion Frequency	0.997	0.890	Normal ($p > 0.05$)
Conflict Resolution Effectiveness	0.995	0.446	Normal ($p > 0.05$)
Comfort Seeking Academic Help from Peers	0.994	0.265	Normal ($p > 0.05$)
Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics	0.995	0.364	Normal ($p > 0.05$)
Academic Performance (Composite)	0.994	0.324	Normal ($p > 0.05$)

All p-values exceeded 0.05, confirming normality. Parametric analyses are therefore appropriate

4.2 Univariate Analysis

The indicators for interpersonal skills, as outlined in the study, include Cooperation in Group Activities, Peer Discussion Frequency, Conflict Resolution Effectiveness, Comfort Seeking Academic Help, and Interpersonal Skills

Improve Academics. These were measured on a Likert scale (5 = high/positive response, 1 = low/negative response). Univariate analysis was conducted to summarize the central tendency and variability of these indicators using data from the respondents. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Interpersonal Skills Indicators

Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Cooperation in Group Activities	2.89	0.65	1	5
Peer Discussion Frequency	3.82	0.52	1	5
Conflict Resolution Effectiveness	2.05	0.59	1	5
Comfort Seeking Academic Help	2.97	0.64	1	5
Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics	3.25	0.39	1	5

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 indicate that learners reported moderate levels of interpersonal skills. Peer Discussion Frequency has the highest mean (3.82, SD=0.52), suggesting that learners engage frequently in peer discussions to understand academic concepts, with relatively moderate variability indicating inconsistency across respondents. Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics also shows a high mean (3.25, SD=0.39), implying a stronger perceived link between interpersonal skills and academic performance. Cooperation in Group Activities (Mean=2.89, SD=0.65) and Comfort Seeking Academic Help (Mean=2.97, SD=0.64) have moderate means, indicating slightly better self-reported abilities, though still moderate. Conflict Resolution Effectiveness (Mean=2.55, SD=0.59) falls in the middle, with moderate variability. Overall, the means (ranging from 2.89 to 3.25) suggest that interpersonal skills are generally perceived as moderate, with standard deviations indicating some variability in learners' responses, possibly reflecting

diverse classroom dynamics or social contexts in Kakamega South Sub-County. These findings provide a foundation for further analysis of how interpersonal skills influence academic performance.

4.3 Correlation between Interpersonal Skills Indicators and Academic Performance

To examine the relationship between interpersonal skills and academic performance, pair-wise Pearson correlations were computed between the five interpersonal skills indicators and the academic performance score. These correlations assess the strength and direction of association between each indicator and academic outcomes, with p-values testing statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

Table 3: Pair-wise Pearson Correlations between Interpersonal Skills Indicators and Academic Performance

Indicator	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Cooperation in Group Activities	0.284	<0.001
Peer Discussion Frequency	0.412	<0.001
Conflict Resolution Effectiveness	0.198	0.011
Comfort Seeking Academic Help	0.156	0.047
Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics	0.392	0.043

The bivariate correlation results in Table 3 reveal varying strengths of association between interpersonal skills indicators and academic performance. Peer Discussion Frequency demonstrates the strongest positive correlation ($r=0.412$, $p<0.001$), indicating a moderate to strong relationship where learners who more frequently engage in

peer discussions to understand academic concepts tend to exhibit significantly better academic performance. This suggests that collaborative academic discourse is a key driver of achievement in this context. Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics shows a moderate and significant correlation ($r=0.392$, $p=0.043$), indicating that learners'

perception of interpersonal skills' impact on academics moderately relates to their actual performance.

4.4 Multivariate Analysis Between Interpersonal Skills and Academic Performance

To further evaluate the influence of interpersonal skills on academic performance, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using academic performance score as the dependent variable. The independent variables were the five interpersonal skills indicators: Cooperation in Group Activities, Peer Discussion Frequency, Conflict Resolution Effectiveness, Comfort Seeking Academic Help, and Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics, measured on a reversed Likert scale. Two models were tested: Model 1 included only the interpersonal skills indicators, while Model 2 incorporated control variables (Gender, Age Bracket, and Parents' Level of Education).

The results, including unstandardized coefficients (UC), standard errors (SE), and p-values, are presented in Table 4.

The regression results in Table 4 for Model 1 (without controls) indicate that Cooperation in Group Activities ($p=0.023$) and Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics ($p=0.024$) have significant positive effects on academic performance, suggesting that learners who cooperate well in groups and perceive interpersonal skills as beneficial to academics tend to perform better. Peer Discussion Frequency ($p=0.160$), Conflict Resolution Effectiveness ($p=0.435$), and Comfort Seeking Academic Help ($p=0.325$) show non-significant effects, with Peer Discussion Frequency exhibiting a higher coefficient. Model 1 explains 9.6% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2=0.096$, Adjusted $R^2=0.067$), with a significant F-statistic ($F=3.323$, $p=0.007$), confirming the model's overall significance.

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Interpersonal Skills on Academic Performance

Variable	Model 1: Without Controls		Model 2: With Controls	
	UC (SE)	p-value	UC (SE)	p-value
Constant	2.128 (0.171)	<0.001	1.827 (0.375)	<0.001
Cooperation in Group Activities	0.123 (0.054)	0.023	0.135 (0.057)	0.020
Peer Discussion Frequency	0.873 (0.051)	0.060	0.882 (0.052)	0.019
Conflict Resolution Effectiveness	0.046 (0.059)	0.435	0.046 (0.059)	0.440
Comfort Seeking Academic Help	-0.049 (0.049)	0.325	-0.055 (0.050)	0.276
Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics	0.158 (0.069)	0.024	0.156 (0.070)	0.026
Gender	-	-	0.080 (0.080)	0.316
Age Bracket	-	-	0.049 (0.146)	0.737
Parents' Level of Education	-	-	0.046 (0.053)	0.389
R²	0.096		0.109	
Adjusted R²	0.067		0.063	
F-Statistic	3.323	0.007	2.353	0.021

Note: UC = Unstandardized Coefficient, SE = Standard Error. Significance levels based on p-values.

In Model 2 (with controls), the inclusion of Gender, Age Bracket, and Parents' Level of Education slightly improves the explained variance ($R^2=0.109$, Adjusted $R^2=0.063$). Cooperation in Group Activities ($p=0.020$) and Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics ($p=0.026$) remain significant, with marginally increased coefficients for the former, indicating robustness after accounting for controls. None of the control variables, Gender ($p=0.316$), Age Bracket ($p=0.737$), or Parents' Level of Education ($p=0.389$), are significant, suggesting they do not substantially confound the relationships. The other interpersonal indicators, other than Cooperation in Group

Activities and peer discussion frequency, remain non-significant, consistent with Model 1. The F-statistic ($F=2.353$, $p=0.021$) affirms Model 2's overall significance.

4.5 Post-estimation Diagnostic Test

To evaluate the assumption of no multicollinearity in the multiple linear regression model for Objective Two (Model 2 with controls), the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was estimated. Multicollinearity, which occurs when independent variables are highly correlated, can inflate standard errors and lead to unreliable coefficient estimates.

VIF values below 5 are generally considered acceptable, while values above 10 indicate problematic

multicollinearity (Kutner et al., 2005). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for Predictors in Model 2

Variable	VIF
Cooperation in Group Activities	1.37
Peer Discussion Frequency	1.14
Conflict Resolution Effectiveness	1.10
Comfort Seeking Academic Help	1.23
Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics	1.21
Gender (Female = 1, Male = 0)	1.18
Age Bracket	1.15
Parent's Level of Education	1.13

The VIF values in Table 5, ranging from 1.10 to 1.37, are all well below the threshold of 5, indicating no evidence of multicollinearity among the predictors in Model 2. This confirms that the independent variables (interpersonal skills indicators and control variables) are not highly correlated with each other, ensuring the stability and reliability of the regression coefficients. For instance, Cooperation in Group Activities has the highest VIF (1.37), but this is still minimal, supporting the robustness of its significant effect on academic performance. The absence of multicollinearity strengthens confidence in the findings that Cooperation in Group Activities and Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics significantly predict academic performance, as intercorrelations do not confound their effects.

4.6 Test of Null Hypothesis

To test the null hypothesis (H_0) for Objective Two, which states that interpersonal skills have no significant influence on academic performance among junior secondary school learners in Kakamega South Sub-County. The overall model was significant, with an F-statistic of 2.353 ($p = 0.021$), leading to the rejection of H_0 at the 0.05 significance level.

4.7 Discussion of the Findings

The current study revealed that interpersonal skills exert a significant but selective influence on academic performance among junior secondary school learners in Kakamega South Sub-County, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. In the multiple linear regression (Model 2), Cooperation in Group Activities ($p=0.020$) and

Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics ($p=0.026$) were significant positive predictors, indicating that effective group cooperation and positive perceptions of interpersonal skills' academic benefits enhance performance. However, Peer Discussion Frequency ($p=0.119$), Conflict Resolution Effectiveness ($p=0.440$), and Comfort Seeking Academic Help ($p=0.276$) were non-significant, with the former showing a slight negative effect, possibly due to contextual limitations like resource constraints or cultural norms affecting peer interactions. The model explained 10.9% of the variance ($R^2=0.109$), with no significant control variables, aligning with Self-Determination Theory's emphasis on relatedness through social skills fostering motivation. These findings suggest that while some interpersonal skills promote academic success, others may require better curriculum integration in the CBC framework to yield stronger effects.

This selective influence parallels findings from Nishino and Watanabe (2021), who examined interpersonal development in Japan's education system through programs like "seikatsu" (daily life education), reporting that group harmony and collective responsibility significantly boost academic achievement by enhancing collaboration and empathy. Similar to the current study's positive effect of Cooperation in Group Activities, their research showed that structured group activities improve engagement and performance, with Japanese students benefiting from culturally embedded interpersonal skills.

In contrast, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) framework on life skills education emphasizes experiential learning for interpersonal skills like empathy and conflict resolution, linking them to improved social dynamics and academic perseverance in diverse settings. The current

study's significant effect of perceived interpersonal benefits (Interpersonal Skills Improve Academics) aligns with WHO's view that awareness of these skills' value motivates learners, but the non-significance of Conflict Resolution Effectiveness diverges, as WHO reports strong ties to reduced behavioral issues and better focus. This difference may arise from WHO's global, idealized guidelines versus the practical challenges in Kenyan rural schools, where conflict resolution might not be adequately practiced, diluting its academic impact.

Naidoo (2021) explored life skills for socio-economic development in South Africa, finding that interpersonal skills like teamwork and seeking help address inequality and enhance academic outcomes, particularly in under-resourced areas. This resonates with the current study's positive coefficient for Cooperation in Group Activities, as both highlight collaboration's role in fostering resilience and achievement amid challenges. Yet, the non-significant Comfort Seeking Academic Help in this study contrasts with Naidoo's emphasis on help-seeking as a key enabler, possibly because South African programs integrate these skills more robustly into curricula, while CBC implementation in Kakamega South may lack sufficient teacher training, leading to weaker effects.

The current findings on the perception of interpersonal skills' academic benefits (significant) are similar to those of Hoadley (2018), who analyzed curriculum reform in South Africa, noting that interpersonal skills embedded in life orientation programs improve social competence and indirectly boost academic performance by reducing disengagement. However, both underscore learners' recognition of these skills' value in motivating study habits. However, the negative trend for Peer Discussion Frequency differs from Hoadley's positive links to collaborative learning, attributable to South Africa's progressive reforms versus potential gaps in Kenyan CBC delivery, where peer discussions might be informal and less academically oriented.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that interpersonal skills have a statistically significant positive influence on the academic performance of junior secondary school learners in Kakamega South Sub-County. Specifically, cooperation in group activities and learners' perception that interpersonal skills improve academics emerged as key predictors, even after controlling for demographic variables. These findings support Self-Determination Theory by demonstrating that fulfillment of the need for relatedness through effective

interpersonal competencies enhances intrinsic motivation, classroom engagement, and academic achievement within the Competency-Based Curriculum framework. Overall, the results affirm that strengthening interpersonal skills can help address the persistent low academic performance observed in the sub-county.

5.2 Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education and Kakamega County education authorities prioritize the integration of structured collaborative learning activities in the Competency-Based Curriculum through regular group projects, peer mentoring programs, and teacher professional development workshops focused on fostering cooperation, conflict resolution, and help-seeking behaviors.
2. School administrators should implement ongoing monitoring of interpersonal skills development and create enabling classroom environments that encourage active peer discussions.
3. Policymakers should allocate resources for teacher training on embedding interpersonal skills explicitly in daily lessons, while encouraging parental involvement through sensitization programs to reinforce these skills at home, ultimately enhancing academic outcomes for junior secondary learners.

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