POPULARITY AND UNPOPULARITY FACTORS, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG STANDARD THREE CHILDREN IN THIKA MUNICIPALITY, KENYA

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology of Kenyatta University.

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April 2002
DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University or any other award

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We confirm that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the candidate under our supervision.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Maurice and Agnes Ndeke for their love, care, and for helping me acquire the appropriate social skills.

I extend my gratitude to all the teachers in Nalolo for their constant support and motivation. I also wish to thank Dr. J. Njajje and Dr. K. Mugerwa for their assistance in this work. My greatest gratitude also goes to Dr. D. Mulungu for his constant support and motivation in seeing this thesis to shape while she was my supervisor. I wish to acknowledge the support of my colleagues throughout my studies.

Finally, I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Principal, Sr. Maria for her keen interest in this work, and for her unwavering encouragement. A special thanks to Sr. Monica Njeri for leading me in her second passion — teaching — and to Sr. Dr. Teresa Mushani, my mentor in education. I say a big thank you.

I extend my gratitude to the Tshaka Municipal Education Officer, Heads of Mathematics, Community, Geography, General English, and all the teachers and pupils at Nalolo for their continual guidance and support during my research period.
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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to establish the factors that contribute to popularity and unpopularity among primary school pupils. The study also investigated sex differences regarding the views boys and girls have on popularity and unpopularity. The relationships between popularity/unpopularity and academic achievement was also investigated.

This study was a descriptive survey. The subjects of the study were Standard three pupils from three primary schools in Thika Municipality. A total of 124 pupils, consisting of an equal number of boys and girls participated in this study.

A sociometric questionnaire, and document analysis schedule were used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part of each question in the questionnaire required the subjects to nominate peers they would prefer/would not prefer to perform certain tasks with. The second set of questions was open-ended and required the subjects to justify their reasons for nominating the particular peers in part one. On these justifications, content analysis method was used to find out the factors that underlie popularity/unpopularity among children.

A Chi-Square test was employed to determine whether there were differences on the kind of reasons boys and girls gave for peers' popularity / unpopularity at the
0.05 alpha level of significance. To establish the relationship between popularity/unpopularity and academic achievement, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed.

The study established six factors that contribute to popularity namely: positive social skills, high socio-economic status, good academic achievement, positive physical attributes, good motor skills, and proximity to residence.

Factors that were found to contribute to unpopularity included: negative social skills, low socio-academic status, poor academic achievement, and negative physical attributes.

From the study, sex differences in the kind of reasons boys and girls gave for peers' popularity/unpopularity were found to exist in the three items namely: reasons for choosing peers to play with, reasons for not choosing peers to sit with and reasons for not liking some peers.

The findings also indicated that there was a positive relationship between popularity and academic achievement; and a negative relationship between unpopularity and academic achievement.
On the basis of the findings, it is recommended that parents encourage their children to learn to share with other classmates whatever they have. Parents should also instill in their children the value of playing cooperatively with other children. As regards teachers, they should encourage shared activities in classroom and outside classroom. They should also try and identify children who lack social skills with an aim of helping them fit with other children properly. The study also recommends that curriculum planners should design programmes that will help teachers in training children who lack social skills.
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There has been great interest in factors influencing social competence in young children because we should only function as individuals within the social context (M. Rutter, 1987). This is especially true for children with attachment disorders (J. Bowlby, 1969). According to attachment theory, children who are judged securely by their parents in childhood also develop secure attachment in adulthood. Consequently, they either remain true to the social structure or move to a new one. Clinical experience further supports the concept that social competence is a key developmental task in young children.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Parents and teachers who have the opportunity to observe children over time usually notice a small percentage of two extreme ends of the sociability spectrum. Some children seem to be at the centre of many positive activities, while others appear arrogant and passive to their environment being usually ignored, misunderstood, ridiculed and rejected by the society. These two extremes of social environments often lead to the social competence of children. This social competence is the ability to interact with others in a given social context in specific ways that are socially acceptable or valued and at the same time personally or primarily beneficial to others.

There has been great interest in factors influencing social competence in young children because the child’s early functioning is predictive of later behavior adjustment (Berk, 1997; Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Cleman, 1996; Vosk, Forehead, Parke, & Richard, 1982). The opposite is true of socially incompetent children. Bullock (1995), has observed that a disproportionate percentage of children in the USA who are judged socially ineffective in elementary school dropout within a six-year period. Such children are not able to cope with the dictates of the environment. Subsequently, they either withdraw from the company of others or become disruptive and arrogant to them. Societal expectation however, is that
children should acquire such social skills, as sharing, helping others, and being cooperative during play which are necessary components of social competence. Social skills and the ability to interact with others are considered fundamental to human development. Children who lack social competence skills are regarded as unpopular or rejected children according to the sociometric rating of popularity.

Rejected children have a low academic achievement and self-esteem and this magnifies their negative reactions to teachers and their classmates. This perception is confirmed by the fact that rejected children usually take very little time in their tasks (Vosk et al. 1982.). Bukatko and Daehler (1998) assert that boys and girls who have good peer relationships enjoy school time, more than those who socialize poorly. The former are likely to experience academic difficulty and dropout of school.

Popular children display a range of social skills that their more unpopular age-mates often lack. For example, Ladd (1983) observed that popular children spend more time in co-operative play, social conversation, and other positive social interactions with peers than their rejected counterparts. Rejected and unpopular children on the other hand, spend more time engaging in antagonistic behaviours such as arguing and playing in a rough and tumble fashion.
Schwartzberg (1994), Youngblade and Belesky, (1992) place the origins of social competence within the family. They assert that, when children feel secure in their family relationships and are confident about their own abilities, they are able to explore new relationships effectively. It should also be pointed out however, that social skills are not the only determinants of popularity. A child's popularity is also related to parenting styles, physical attractiveness, name of the child, and motor skills (Bukatko & Daehler, 1998). In their study among pre-school children, Vaughn and Langlois (1983) found that physical attractiveness was related to social competence of children. Parents also play an influential role in the relationships of their children with peers through their parenting styles. For instance, Schwartzberg (1994) posits that children of authoritarian, power-assertive parents are more likely to be classified as rejected.

It is also true to argue that girls and boys have differences in their social behaviour and the reasons they attach to popularity. Maccoby (1990) noted that girls have an enabling pattern while boys have restrictive style that tends to derail peer interaction. Maccoby (1990) proposes that same sex biases are attributed to sex stereotyping. Gender is a salient category and children of different cultures promote in-group and out-group stereotyping.

In Kenya, studies on social competence of children are limited. For example, Lewanika (1984), suggested that nursery school curriculum should include social
development needs that promote social interaction skills of children. Nyonyintono (1981) writing about socializing the child noted that children should be encouraged to work with others so as to learn the "give and take" of social life. Similarly, Gakuru (1979) observed that high cost nursery schools enhance the development of social skills in children. However, these studies have not specifically addressed the issue of popular and unpopular children.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Peer rejection has been associated with a number of negative outcomes. Existing literature confirm that not having friends or playmates can be frustrating, and even disturbing for children. Children without friends are victims of their own behaviour. Researchers believe that those children who remain unpopular, either openly disliked or simply unacknowledged, are at risk of greater problems. These problems include loneliness, juvenile delinquency, dropping out of school, truancy, poor academic performance and other indices of behavioural disorders. In addition, a growing body of research support the belief held by many childhood professionals that young children's peer relationships are important for their development and adjustment in school. This study therefore, hoped to find out some of the factors that make children more unpopular among their peers.

Every year, parents, government, and society as a whole entrust their school age children to teachers who are responsible for helping them excel academically in
accordance to the national goals of education. As teachers carry on with their
duties, they are faced with situations whereby some children are disliked and
rejected by their classmates. Often these custodians (the teachers) do not have the
correct professional competence to address the said shortcomings owing to lack of
proven knowledge on these factors and social skills. It is within this context that
this study sought to establish factors that contribute to popularity and
unpopularity among children.

Research Questions

Although studies exist that point to why children are popular and others
unpopular, these factors may or may not apply to our Kenyan situation because
they have been done in Europe and North America. This study sought to establish
whether or not the cited factors would be applicable in Kenya since cultures vary
in the amount and quality of experience they structure for children.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Characteristics associated with popularity are many and varied. The aim of this
study was to find out those factors which are associated with popularity among
our Kenya children. Similarly, the study sought also to establish the factors
associated with unpopularity. Considering the possible negative impacts of social
isolation and rejection, it was the concern of this study to examine those factors
that underline unpopularity among school children so that appropriate
intervention can be sought.
1.4 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that identification of factors that make children popular among their peers can provide childhood educators with rationale to design appropriate programmes that will help foster popularity skills.

Problems of social incompetence in childhood have been associated with a variety of social and academic problems. This relationship points to the need to identify the unpopular children, investigate the causes and the consequences of unpopularity in order to take appropriate measures to prevent further occurrences. By identifying the reasons that make children unpopular, teachers, guidance and counseling personnel and policy makers can take appropriate measures to help unpopular children acquire the needed skills.

Social skills training programmes can be developed to teach unpopular children so that they become involved in positive interaction with their peers. Knowing the academic consequences of peer rejection can provide teachers with the basis and rationale for effective intervention. For example, by establishing that unpopular children perform poorly in class, academic intervention can be instituted to ensure that their performance improves.
Wade and Tauris (1987), suggested that social competence might have its roots in the child's earliest attachment relationships and parental styles of interaction. This study can therefore, be very useful to parents and caretakers since they are the first people to interact with their own children. For example, parents can play an important role by providing verbal instruction in how to negotiate the social environment. They can also influence children by suggesting appropriate social behaviours (e.g., sharing, or playing together with other children).

Similarly, incidences of bullying and property destruction that occur sometimes in schools would be minimized if unpopular children are identified earlier in life and helped to be more popular among their peers. Equally, teachers will find this study useful because by knowing the causes of rejection among peers, they can structure the school environment to facilitate positive peer interaction and development.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

While the researcher made every effort to make the interview for the sociometric questionnaire as objective as possible, it is difficult to rule out that the researcher being new to the subjects might have influenced the results of this study. Further, academic performance is a multi-dimensional concept. It depends on the interaction of very many factors. Therefore, the findings of this study were most likely influenced by other factors, which were not to be investigated for example
level of motivation and availability of learning/teaching resources. Similarly, since the researcher was questioning the pupils and filling their responses in the questionnaire, some pupils might have been frightened by the presence of the researcher who was not one of their teachers and withheld some important information. However, the researcher tried to minimize this effect by visiting the sampled schools earlier and familiarizing herself with the pupils before going for the actual research.

Financial constraints and the amount of time that the researcher took with each subject contributed to the researcher's use of only three schools in this study.

1.6 Operational Definitions of Terms

1. **Academic Achievement**
   
   This is the average performance in all subjects in the Municipality end of term examinations.

2. **Peer Acceptance**

   The liking by age-mates because one is worthy partner.

3. **Popularity**

   Positive nominations by peers in the classroom. Popular children tend to elicit many "like more" nominations.

4. **Unpopularity**

   Negative nominations by peers in the classroom. Unpopular children tend to elicit many "like least" nominations.
5. **Rejected children**

These are the unpopular children as rated by the sociometric scale and who are actively disliked by others because of their poor interactive skills, physical looks, name, or inadequate motor skills.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, theoretical orientations, their extensions and applications are discussed. These include: Attachment theory, social competence model, attachment and children’s peer relationship, parental influence on social competence development, physical attractiveness, social skills development consequences of unpopularity, sex differences in social orientations, and finally, popularity and academic achievement.

2.1.1 Attachment Theory

The attachment theory was propounded by Bowlby (1969, 1973). It attempts to explain the importance of bonding between the parents or the caretaker and the infant. The basic assumption of attachment theory is that as the child gets older he or she begins to learn about people from the way he or she is handled by the caretaker. If the parents or the caretaker takes good care of the child, by making sure he or she is fed, gets sleep, is clean and warm, plays with and loves him or her, as the child gets older, he will continue to develop positive social relationships with others.

Securely attached children display a range of characteristics, which enable them to interact comfortably with peers. Njoroge (1992) observed that securely
attached children interact willingly with a friendly stranger, undertake new tasks enthusiastically, are persistent, and make friends easily. Children who emerge from securely and rewarding homes are interested in, and are capable of initiating interactions and receiving overtures from others. Such children are popular among their peers as measured by sociometric techniques. The child who fails to form the bond has been held less, touched less, and lacks closeness with the parent or the caretaker.

2.1.2 Attachment and Children’s Peer Relationships

The continuity of attachment with subsequent relationships is most clearly demonstrated in those peer relationships, which are formed soonest after the primary attachment. This is because these relationships are less coloured by other relationship experiences.

A number of studies confirm that infants securely attached to their mothers at 12-19 months of age also show positive patterns of social behaviour three or four years later in nursery schools (Erwin, 1993). Children from a background of secure attachment are likely to be confident, curious, skillful and less dependent. They are also more socially oriented, empathic than less attached children, and act in a more co-operative, friendly and outgoing manner to other infants and adults (Erickson, Sroufe & Egeland, 1985). They consequently tend to be more popular
and have more friends (LaFreniere & Sroufe, 1985), than children who lacked secure attachment.

In a study by Waters, Wippman, and Scaroufe (1979) infants rated as securely or anxiously attached to their mothers at 15 months of age were observed again at 42 months old during play with peers at nursery school. On 11 out of 12 measuring personal competence, the securely attached groups were rated higher than the insecurely attached group. Similarly, Parke and Waters (1989) observed four year old friends during free play and found that where both members were classified as securely attached, the interaction was more harmonious, less controlling, more responsive, and happier than was the case in pairs where one member was insecurely attached.

Although many studies support the view that the attachment relationship to a large extent determines subsequent peer relationships, an alternative view argues that there are methodological problems with many of these studies that lead to this conclusion. For example, Lewis and Feiring (1989) concluded that, in general, the theoretical belief that early infant-mother security of attachment relates to later friendship patterns is not well supported by the empirical findings.
2.1.3 Social Competence Model

To succeed in forming and maintaining good relationships with other children requires that the child understands the behaviour of the other children and makes the appropriate responses to their behaviour. This is not a simple task, but requires that the child make a series of decisions and experiences in order to evaluate the situation and respond according to his assessment. How well children make these decisions plays a central role in how likely they are to be successful with their peers.

Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, and Brown (1986) have proposed a five-step model of social competence, based on the child's growing social information-processing skills.

At each stage of the decision-making model, the child can make a decision that will be either helpful or misleading to him or her. According to him, the first step in processing social information is to focus on the correct cues. Second, the child must meaningfully interpret the social cues based on his/her past experiences. In the third step of processing, the child generates one or more potential behavioral responses. Fourth, the child learns to evaluate the potential consequences of each possible behavior. Finally, the child enacts the best behaviour he or she internally selects.

Figure I depicts this scenario.
**Figure 1: Social Competence Model**

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**Source:** Dodge, 1986
The origins of these five steps lie in the biological make-up, past experiences, and social cues surrounding the event. Children who are low in social competence may have difficulties at any step in this model such that they cannot interpret situations correctly and as a result, they are rejected by their peers.

According to Dodge (1986), upon entering a new group, aggressive (negatively) unpopular children show problem at each of the five steps in the information-processing sequence. This behaviour leads these children to be negatively evaluated by peers.

2.3 Parental Influence on Social Competence Development

Children, as well as adults, are frequently faced with situations in which they must initiate contact with peers. A necessary task for all children when entering nursery school is to become acquainted with the other children in pre-school and primary school. Studies have consistently shown that being accepted by peers is related to prosocial styles of interaction (Gottaman, Gonso & Rasmussen 1975). These include helping others and sharing. However, in order for children to be able to interact with others, they must learn from their parents the proper behaviours. This is because parents affect the relationships their children have with peers.

Bukatko and Daehler (1998) assert that parents who exhibit an authoritative parenting style such that they are responsive, nurturant and provide verbal
explanations, tend to have children who are popular and who display prosocial behaviours with peers.

Parker and Bhavnagri (1988) found that children whose parents were authoritarian and power-assertive were more likely to be rejected in pre-school. Similarly, teachers perceived such children as more hostile and aggressive than children who were less closely supervised by their parents.

Children's interaction with their peers is related to their relationship with their parents. Putallaz (1987) found that mothers who behave averagely towards their children are likely to have children who display aversive and disagreeable behaviour with unfamiliar peers. Similarly, MacDonald and Parke (1984) observed that children's abrasiveness with peers was correlated with parental directiveness, especially from the father. Parents' interaction styles with their children are related to their social behaviour with peers. For example, Puttallaz (1987) reported that mothers of high status first-graders were found to interact in a more positive and agreeable manner with their children. Further, mothers of lower-status children were found to exhibit more negative and controlling behaviour with their children than mothers of high-status children.

Parents influence their children's peer relationships through their roles as coaches or educators. Parents can give advice, support, and give directions about the most helpful strategies for their conduct with peers. The parent as a social skills coach...
plays a significant role affecting the young child's social competence and peer popularity. For example, the play of young pre-schoolers with unfamiliar peers seems to benefit from parental assistance more than older pre-schoolers (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991). The parents of pre-school and first grade children of high sociometric status appear to interact in a more sensitive and positive manner with their children than do the parents of less popular children who appear to be more controlling, directive, and intrusive in their interactions (Austine & Lindaner, 1990).

A study by Russell and Finnie (1990) examined the guidance given by mothers to their four- and five-year old children for joining an existing unknown pair of peers at play. It was observed that mothers of popular children were more likely to suggest a group-oriented strategy while mothers of less popular children showed more negative and controlling behaviour towards their children. However, Foster and Ritchey (1985) observed no differences in the rates of positive and negative initiations of interaction by rejected and accepted children. However, as providers of opportunities for peer interaction, parents have a great influence on their children's peer relationships (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1985, 1991, Lollis & Ross, 1992).

Parents also play an important role as mediators. For example, Lieberman (1977) found that parents who arranged for other children to come and visit their homes
had children who were socially responsive in nursery school. Parents influence children by suggesting appropriate social behaviours (e.g., sharing, or playing together with other children) and by providing explicit rationales for behaviour, particularly rationales that emphasize the consequences of their social actions to other people (Asher, Renshaw, & Hymel, 1982). Parents who use such techniques have children who are more prosocial and who are judged by their peers to be more considerate to others. As depicted in the following figure, parents who interact with their children as partners, coaches or educators and provide opportunities for peer interaction help them to successfully interact with other children.

**Figure 2: Family - Peer Relationship Model**

![Family - Peer Relationship Model](image_url)

*Source: Hetherington and Parke (1997).*
2.4 Physical Attractiveness

During the early and middle childhood, children have different expectations of attractive and unattractive age-mates. Both pre-school and elementary school-age children believe that children with attractive faces are more friendly, intelligent, and social than unattractive children (Dion & Berscheid, 1974; Langlois & Stephen, 1981).

Langlois, Roggman, Casey, Ritter, Rieser-Danner, and Jenkins (1987) tested 2-3 month and 6-8 month children by showing them pairs of colour slides of 16 adult Caucasian women, half rated by adult judges as attractive, half rated as unattractive. The results showed that even two-month old babies preferred to look at the attractive faces. Langlois, Ritter, Roggman and Vaughn (1991) used the same procedure but showed some six-month old infants pictures of attractive black women faces, baby faces varying in attractiveness, all with neutral expressions. The results revealed that in every case, babies looked significantly longer at the attractive than unattractive faces regardless of age, race, colour and sex of model.

Langlois, Roggman, & Rieser Danne (1990) observed one-year old babies interacting with an adult wearing either an attractive or an unattractive mask. They found that toddlers showed more positive affection, less
withdrawal, and more play involved with the stranger in the attractive mask. The one-year old also played with an attractive than an unattractive doll.

2.5 Social Skills Development

One of the most important factors in peer acceptance is the constellation of social behaviour displayed by popular and unpopular children. Parkshust and Asher (1992) found that generally popular children engage in prosocial cooperative and normative behaviours and show a high degree of social skills. Social skills enable an individual to initiate and maintain contacts and relationships with other people and to co-operate effectively with them (Hussen & Neville, 1994).

Ladd (1983) observed third- and fourth-grade children and noted that popular children spent more time in co-operative play, social conversation, and other social interactions with peers. On rejected children, he found that they spent more time engaging in antagonistic behaviour such as arguing, rough play, or standing lonely a distant from peers.

Asher and Ranshaw (1981) interviewed 65 Kindergarten children concerning their ideas about how to behave in initiation situation as well as other social situations. On the basis of sociometric measures, 32 of the children were classified as popular, while 33 were classified as unpopular. The popular children were more likely to suggest strategies such as talking to or playing with the child, or
proposing a joint activity. In contrast, the study found that, unpopular children were more likely to offer vague and inappropriate ideas such as "smile together". Ladd and Oden (1979), also examined third and fourth graders’ ideas concerning how to help another child. The results revealed that children who were unpopular gave more responses that were ineffective and, if implemented, would in all likelihood fail to consolidate a positive relationship with other children.

Children who are agreeable and willing to be flexible have good interaction with their pre-school aged peers (Black & Logan, 1995; Hazen & Black, 1989). However, Mize, (1995), postulates that being agreeable is not the most important thing. He maintains that children must be well attuned to the social context, that is, they should be responsive and able to “mesh” their behaviour with the behaviour of their play partners.

2.6 Consequences of Unpopularity

Numerous studies concur that childhood peer rejection predicts future psychological problems in children (e.g. Coie, Lochman, Terry & Hyman, 1992; Kupersmidt, Coie & Dodge, 1990; Olledick, Weist, Borden & Green 1992; Parke & Asher, 1987). In their study, Burton and Krantz (1990) found that children who are disliked by their peers in the first and second grades were more likely than popular children to exhibit disruptive and compulsive behaviour in later grades.
Similarly, Shwartzberg (1994) observed that about a third of rejected children will be rejected five years later. In their review, Parke and Asher (1987) found that children who were poorly accepted by their peers were more likely to drop out of school and be likely to develop patterns of criminal activity than well-accepted children.

Dishion (1990) found that rejected boys and girls had poor self-monitoring and self-discipline skills. They also showed more family stress, were from a lower socioeconomic level and displayed behavioural problems. Carton (1996) studied 140 third and fourth-grade children on sex differences as a correlate of peer acceptance and rejection. Children completed self-report measures of depression, social anxiety, and perceived competence to assess concurrent adjustment. Results revealed that the association between social anxiety and peer rejection was stronger for girls than for boys. In addition, there was a trend for the relation between sociometric status and self-reported depression to be stronger for girls than for boys.

Unpopularity among peers can lead to both short-term and long-term problems. For example, Asher, Hymel, and Renshaw, (1984); Asher, Parkhurst, Hymel and Williams (1990), observed that unpopular children are socially dissatisfied and report feeling lonely. They perceive themselves to be less able and generally isolated. Unfortunately for socially unpopular children, social standing tends to
remain stable across time and in different situations. Across a five-year-span, Coie and Dodge (1988) found modest stability for unpopular children. While popular children may lose their high status and neglected children become more socially accepted, children who were once rejected have a high chance of staying rejected across a wide time span.

A study by Dodge, Coie, Pettit, and Price (1990) found that both conflict-related and non-conflict-related aggression occurred more frequently among rejected boys. Similarly, negative nomination or social rejection appears to be closely related to conflict. For example, Pettit et al. (1996) found that rejected boys initiated more aggression, responded aggressively to another’s aggression, and escalated aggressive conflict when counter-aggression occurred. He also found that rejected boys were involved in more fights than non-rejected boys.

### 2.7 Sex Differences In Social Interaction

A common emphasis in the literature on children’s friendships is that girls have more intimate and exclusive friendships than boys. On the other hand, boys are said to be more peer-oriented than girls in the pre-school and have more friends and play in larger groups (Erwin, 1993). A fairly consistent research finding is that boys show more aggression and competitiveness at almost all ages. Faggot and Hagan (1985), observed playgroups of 18-36 month—old toddlers and found that assertive behaviours were more common in boys than in girls. In terms of
behaviour, bullying and overt persuasion attempts associated with popularity in six-year-old boys were no longer evident two years later (Dodge, Coie, Pettit, Price, 1990).

Maccoby (1990), has described boys as more power assertive in their behaviour and more concerned with maintaining their status in the male hierarchy and achieving their individual freedom in group interactions, in contrast to girls who are more polite behaviourally and more socially oriented and concerned with relationship enhancement goals. Similarly, Shantz and Hartup (1992) agreed with Maccoby that boys appear to be more concerned with power and status during interactions with other children, while girls are concerned with relationships and sustaining harmonious interaction.

### 2.8 Popularity and Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is one of the most important factors that are related to social competence of school-going children. As children set out for school, parents lay out their academic expectations for them. However, most parents do not understand why some of their children perform poorly at school. Clarke-Stewart, Friedman and Koch (1985) concluded that children favour peers who are academic achievers and those with moderate aspiration.
Ladd, Kochenderfer, and Coleman (1996) investigated the friendship quality as a predictor of young children’s early school adjustment. The subjects were 82 Kindergarten children with a mean age of 5.61 years. The results indicated that perceived exclusivity in friendships was associated with lower levels of academic achievement. Likewise, Vosk, Forehead, Parke, and Richard (1982) compared 101 popular and unpopular third and fourth-grade pupils attending public school using multi-method comparison procedure to identify differences between these two populations. Classroom observation indicated that unpopular children spent significantly less time on task than popular children do and engaged in significantly more negative interactions. There was a trend for popular children to perform at a higher academic level than unpopular children.

Similarly, Leonoff (1993) studied 1069 high school students (562 males and 507 females) aged 15 and 18 years. The purpose of the study was to assess the relationship among parental, peer, and personality factors for the task of academic achievement during adolescence. Male underachievers reported decreased popularity, with same gender peers. Male and female underachievers reported decreased popularity with opposite-gender peers with increased age. However, poor performance can also be attributed to other factors not related to popularity issues.
2.9 Summary of Literature Review

In the foregoing review, the attachment theory shows that initial attachment to a caregiver has an effect on the popularity and unpopularity of a child in later life. Secure attachment almost invariably engenders popularity, and poor attachment, unpopularity. Similarly, parents who interact well with their children seem to prepare these children for proper interaction with peers.

On physical attractiveness, children who are attractive physically tend to be more popular than those who are not. The same is true of children whose social skills are better developed. They too are liked by their peers and hence are popular among them.

Literature has revealed that there are also sex differences in the way children interact with each other, and hence this may influence their popularity rating.

Lastly, from the review of the literature, we have seen that unpopularity has its own consequences. These include poor relationships, dropping out of school, truancy, poor academic achievement, and other undesirable behaviours. However, research done in Kenya is not sufficient to confirm or refute such findings hence the decision to undertake this study.
2.10. Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were advanced to guide the study:

(a) Research Hypothesis

1. Pupils (both boys and girls) differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers' popularity.
2. Boys and girls differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers' unpopularity.
3. There is significant positive relationship between popularity and academic achievement.
4. There is significant negative relationship between unpopularity and academic achievement.

(b) Null Hypotheses

1. Pupils (both boys and girls) do not differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers' popularity.
2. Boys and girls do not differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers' unpopularity.
3. There is no significant positive relationship between popularity and academic achievement.
4. There is no significant negative relationship between unpopularity and academic achievement.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research Design

This study was a descriptive survey. A descriptive study involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects of the study.

3.1 Population, Sample, and Sampling Strategy

The population of the study was standard three children in Thika Municipality schools. Since social competence of children starts early in life, it was proper, therefore, that this study was done with young children. Standard three children were selected for this study because it was assumed that they have lived with each other for more than two years and they knew each other well. In addition, standard three children are likely to be more expressive and likely to be more reliable than younger children in their responses.

Three mixed primary schools were randomly selected for the study out of the twenty-two public schools in the Municipality. To decide which schools were to participate in the study, a list of all schools in the Municipality was obtained from the Municipal Education Office. Using the schools’ code numbers, three schools were randomly selected. A lottery method (simple random sampling) was used in
which all code numbers were written on slips of papers. These slips so prepared
were put into a box and mixed thoroughly. Without looking into the box, three
slips, one after the other were picked by the researcher. The schools that were
picked are Gatumaini Primary School, Mugumoini Primary School, and General
Kago Primary School. Since every school had several streams, another lottery had
to be conducted in each school in order to get the stream to participate in the study.
A fourth school (Moi Academy Primary School) was picked for pilot study.

All the children in the selected streams of the said schools took part in the study. A
total of 124 pupils comprising 39 children from Gatumaini, 43 from Mugumoini,
and 42 from General Kago participated in this study. The sample consisted of
equal number of boys and girls.

Thika Municipality was selected because it always has end of term examinations
for all classes every term of the year. These examinations were appropriate
measures of academic achievement because they are set by panels formed by at
least one subject teacher from each school in the Municipality.

Mixed primary schools were selected because the researcher needed gender
analysis on what reasons boys and girls give for peers’ popularity and
unpopularity.
3.2 Instrumentation

Two data collection instruments were used in this study.

(a) A Sociometric Questionnaire

(b) Document Analysis Schedule

3.2.1 Sociometry Questionnaire

Sociometric is a technique used in the assessment and analysis of the interpersonal relationships within a group of individuals. By analysing the expressed choices of preferences of group members for other members of the group, the degree of acceptance or rejection by members of the group can be determined (Gay, 1981).

The basic sociometric process involves asking each member to indicate the names of other members she or he would most likely engage in a particular activity.

In this study, the sociometric questionnaire was composed of thirteen specific questions. Each question had two parts. The first part sought for the names of the classmates the children would or would not choose in various situations. The second part of each question required children to give justifications for their choices.

Ten questions out of thirteen furnished the researcher with the names of the children who received positive nominations while the other three questions gave the names of the children who received negative nominations and why they
received such a rating. It was assumed that positive nominations indicated popularity while negative nominations indicated unpopularity among peers.

3.2.2 Document Analysis Schedule

Academic Achievement

With the help of the headteachers of the sampled schools, the researcher collected the end of term one-examination results year 2000. The overall scores and individual subject scores for academic performance of all the children were used in the determination of the relationship between popularity rating and academic achievement.

3.2.3 Development of Sociometric Questionnaire

Focus group discussion

A focus group discussion is a discussion of 6-12 persons guided by a facilitator during which members talk freely and spontaneously about a chosen topic. In this study, the group was composed of 8 children, 4 boys and 4 girls drawn from standard three children in Moi Academy Primary School, Thika Municipality. The researcher asked the pupils to volunteer to form this focus group. After getting these 8 children, the researcher together with the children found an appropriate place to hold their discussion (outside under a shade). Once outside, the researcher introduced herself again and the children also introduced themselves.
After the introduction, each child was given a crayon and a piece of paper and asked to draw a picture of themselves. Children were allowed to move freely and borrow from their friends other colours of crayons as needed. The purpose of this first part was to make children relax and to feel free with each other and the researcher.

The second part of the focus group discussion was prompted by three short questions posed by the researcher (facilitator). Each child was instructed to answer the questions individually. The questions were as follows:

1. Write down 5 things you like doing with your friends.

2. Write down 5 things you don’t like about some of your classmates.

3. Write down 3 places you like visiting with your classmates.

After answering the questions, the children were requested to sit in a circle in order to share their answers. The children were reminded that whatever each one shared should be respected. As the children shared, the researcher noted down the points after which she gave the summary of the answers to the group. The whole discussion took about 40 minutes. The rationale behind the focus group discussion was to get some common words which children knew and could be used comfortably for the purpose of formulating the questionnaire. For example, it came out clearly that the standard three children in that school knew the word “animal
orphanage” and some of them had even visited. After the discussion, the researcher thanked the children and informed them that they would also take part in the pilot study which they willingly accepted.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study was carried out at Moi Academy Primary School prior to the main research. All the standard three children (34) in the selected school took part in the study. The aim of the study was to help the researcher assess the kind of responses she could expect to collect from the research. The pilot study also allowed the researcher to familiarize herself with the administration of the sociometric questionnaire and especially the time that was to be taken between each subject and the researcher.

Since the children in this school were already familiar with the researcher because of the focus group discussion, they were keen and ready to take any instructions. The researcher had already formulated thirteen open-ended questions. The interview between the researcher and the children took place at a corner inside the children’s classroom. Each question in the questionnaire was dealt with systematically one after the other until the last question. The responses were then filled in each child’s questionnaire. The pilot study took four days.
After the pilot study, two questions in the questionnaire had to be reformulated. Question 4 which originally read: “which child in this class do you like least?” was reformulated to read: “which child in this class do you not like at all?” The words “like least” were found to be difficult for the children to understand. The other question which was changed after the pilot study was question 7 which originally read: “which child in this class do you share toys with?” The words ‘share toys with’ had to be changed because some children expressed that they did not carry toys to school. This question was therefore reformulated to read: “which child in this class do you share storybooks with?” since children said what they carry to school are storybooks.

To establish the reliability of coding of the categories after the pilot study, a different rater was trained by the researcher to categorize the children’s reasons for their nominations. The coding was then compared with that of the researcher to establish the inter-coder reliability. Where there were inconsistencies in the coding, the researcher discussed together with the second rater and arrived at a compromise.

### 3.2.4 Administration of the Sociometric Questionnaire

**(a) Introduction**

The children were informed that the information being collected was to help in understanding something about their classmates. The researcher also explained to
the children that they should feel free and that whatever they shared would be
treated confidentially. To establish rapport, the researcher asked the children to
sing one of their favourite songs. After the song, the researcher took some time
discussing with the children some general issues that are of interest to them, for
example their favourite subjects.

(b) Questionnaire Administration

The questionnaire was administered to each child individually in a quiet room in
each school while the rest of the children remained in their classrooms with their
class teachers. The researcher asked each question orally, each at a time. The
responses were recorded in each child's questionnaire form. The researcher took
between 15 and 25 minutes to administer the questionnaire to each child.

At the end of each interview between the child and the researcher, the children
were specifically asked not to discuss their responses with each other after the
session to ensure confidentiality.

3.3.0. Data Analysis Technique

(a) Content analysis

According to Kerlinger (1973), the unit of analysis in content analysis can be a
"word" or "a theme". In this study, themes as expressed by the children in the
second part of each question were used as the units of analysis. The justifications
(reasons) children gave for popularity and unpopularity were grouped into the following categories:

(i) Social Skill

These are variables which lie within the child’s control and which enable the individual to initiate and maintain contacts with other people and to co-operate effectively with them. Examples of social skills are being helpful, keen, patient, sharing things (for example food, books, pencil), being considerate towards others, a good sense of humour, taking turns, appreciating others, telling the truth, and saying ‘thank you’.

(ii) Lack of Social Skills

This means that the child is not able to interact with the other children in a peaceful and co-operative manner. Examples of lack of social skills are beating other children, abusing, telling lies, disrupting others, making noise in class, and using other children’s things without their permission.

(iii) Physical Attributes

These are the physical appearances which attract other children. For example, being beautiful, handsome, neat, clean, and tidy.
(iv) **Negative Physical Attributes**

These are the physical looks of a child which make other children not to like her/him. For example wearing torn clothes that are not mended, having mucous substance in the nose, wearing dirty clothes, and being generally dirty and smelly.

(v) **Motor skills**

These are the skills that are related to the movement of muscles. Examples of such skills are being good at sports, physically strong, handling materials carefully.

(vi) **Academic Achievement**

This refers to the level of good performance in classwork as evaluated by the school examinations or daily participation in subjects discussions. Examples are helping other children to do daily class tasks like Mathematics, English, attaining good class position in school examination, being bright in class, and generally scoring high marks in subjects.

(vii) **Poor Academic Achievement**

This refers to the level of poor performance as evaluated by teachers through class participation or school examinations. This includes not completing their homework, scoring poorly in classwork or school examinations, and generally attaining poor position in overall class examinations.
(viii) Social Economic Status

Refers to the financial situation of the family. For example having a car, television set, a hotel, carrying nice food to school, having money to buy snacks like cakes, ice cream, wearing good and clean uniform.

(ix) Proximity to Residence

This refers to living in the same neighbourhood. For example, living in the same plot, same estate, walking home together, etc.

(x) Others

These are other reasons which children gave and which cannot fit in the already mentioned categories. For example, same sex, same name, same age.

Descriptive analysis

Data collected from children on the thirteen questions were put into the above categories. These categories were then presented in frequencies and percentages in each question in order to compare the responses of one item with responses on the other items. The categories were then used to establish:

1. The possible factors that could contribute to popularity among standard three children.

2. To establish the factors that could underlie unpopularity among standard three children.
3. If there are gender differences in the reasons boys and girls give for peers' popularity and unpopularity.

(b) Chi-square

To test the hypothesis that pupils (both boys and girls) differ in the reasons they give for peers' popularity/unpopularity, a Chi-square test was used. Here the observed frequencies of boys and girls' choices were compared to the expected frequencies to see whether they were significantly different.

(c) Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient

To find out the relationship between popularity/unpopularity and academic achievement, the Pearson 'r' was used. Here the total popularity/unpopularity score of all the children who took part in the study were correlated with the overall score of all the children's end of term examinations to find out their relationship.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to explain the factors that contribute to popularity. The differences in the reasons boys and girls gave for peers’ popularity and unpopularity is discussed. Finally, the relationship between popularity, and unpopularity and academic achievement is also discussed. The results are based on the null hypotheses stated in chapter two:

1. Pupils (both boys and girls) do not differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers popularity.

2. Boys and girls do not differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers’ unpopularity.

3. There is no significant positive relationship between popularity and academic achievement.

4. There is no significant negative relationship between unpopularity and academic achievement.

To test hypothesis (1) and (2), a Chi-square test was used, while for hypothesis (3) and (4) Pearson product moment correlation was employed. In order to determine
the relationship between popularity and academic achievement, the total sum of children's popularity scores were correlated with the total sum of all the children's academic achievement scores. To get the relationship between unpopularity and academic achievement, all the children's academic scores were summed up and then correlated with sum total of all the children’s unpopularity score.

Coding categories were used to show the factors that underlie popularity and unpopularity. These categories were generated after grouping the reasons children gave for choosing or not choosing particular peers to perform certain activities. The coding categories used to analyze the data on popularity were:

(a) Positive social skills
(b) High socio-economic status
(c) Good academic achievement
(d) Positive physical attributes
(e) Good motor skills
(f) Proximity to residence
(g) Others (e.g. shares same name)

The coding categories used in analyzing reasons on unpopularity were:

(a) Lack of social skills
(b) Low socio-economic status
(c) Poor academic achievement
(d) Negative physical attributes
(e) Others (e.g. sharing same name)

The data are presented in form of frequencies and percentages. The percentages of responses to stimuli items soliciting information on reasons given for children's popularity are presented. The percentages of responses of items soliciting information on reasons for unpopularity are also discussed below.

4.2 Reasons for Popularity

To find out the factors that underlie popularity, ten items were used. Each item was analyzed individually since children may be popular in one occasion and not in other occasions.

4.2.1 Reasons Children Gave for Choosing a Playmate

When responding to the question “With whom in this class would you like to play? Tell me why you would like to play with this child”. Children gave several reasons, which were put into various categories. Table 1 gives the summary of the categories.
Table 1: Percentage Distributions of Children’s Reasons for Choosing a Playmate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N = 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive social skills</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High socio-economic status</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good academic achievement</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive physical attributes</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 1, it is clear that social skills category was cited by the highest percentage of children (44.4%). This means that these skills were the most important attributes that children look for in peers when deciding who to play with. In this category, “sharing” was upheld by many children. For example, Mary (not her real name) when responding to the question said, “I give Jane my things and she gives me chips and cake”. In his response Kevin said, “I like Mutua because he makes people happy”. Kamau also said, “I like Omondi because he is funny to play with”. The second important factor that children cited for choosing a playmate was socio-economic status (21.8%). In response to the same question Francis said, “John’s father has a hotel and so he brings me ‘chapati’ and with the money his father gives him we buy ice cream”.

Academic achievement also featured prominently as one of the factors that children value when choosing a playmate. It accounted for 21.0%. For example,
Sara answering the question said, “she comes number one in the class and I come number fifteen"[sic]. Other reasons were of less importance with physical appearance taking up the rear.

### 4.2.2 Reasons Children Gave for Choosing a Sitting Partner

The second question that the children were asked was, “Who in this class would you like to sit with? Tell me why you would like to sit with this child”. The categories of reasons that the children gave appear in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N = 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive social skills</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good academic achievement</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High socio-economic status</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good motor skills</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that social skills are crucial for children's choice of a sitting partner.

In answering the question why she would choose a particular child as a sitting partner, Sara answered, “she snacks her break (snacks children take during 10 o’clock break) with me when I have none”. For Sara, sharing is a very important skill to possess. Daniel on the other hand said, “Alex is not a jealous boy”. Still on the same question Jimmy said, “Mohammed is a good boy, he does not take people’s things without permission, he always asks for permission.” [sic]
Academic achievement ranked second in importance in choosing a sitting partner. In particular, being able to get assistance from someone appears an attractive factor. When responding to the same question Vincent said, “The teacher gives us very difficult questions but John always tells me the answer”. Similarly, on the same question Titus answered, “I would rather sit with Frank because he helps me always in my studies”. Children also like peers who are serious with their studies and especially those who pay attention when the teacher is teaching.

4.2.3 Reasons Children Gave for Inviting Peers to their Homes

Five categories emerged from children’s responses to the question “Which child in your class would you like to invite to your home? “Tell me why you would invite this child to your home?” The highest percentage of children said they would invite some peers to their homes because of their social skills. The results appear in Table 3.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Children’s Reasons for Inviting Peers to their Homes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N = 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In responding to the question Mark said, “I like him, when I have no pencil I tell him and he gives me after he finishes writing. I give him back when I finish and tell him thank you”. For Mark, it is important that the peers he invites to his home possess the skill of sharing. Still on the same question Nancy said, “She comes to visit me at our house and then she helps me to clean our house”. Social skills category had therefore the highest percentage of children who cited it.

Proximity to residence was the second most popular category after social skills.

For example, Jane answering the question said, “She is my neighbour, her home is near my home and her mother comes to visit my mother”. Apart from parents visiting each other, children also like those peers who also visit them.

### 4.2.4 Reasons Children Gave for Liking Some Peers Best

The fourth question that the children were asked was “Who in this class do you like best? Tell me why you like this child best”. The percentage of the children who gave reasons in each category appears in Table 4.
Table 4: Percentage Distributions of Children’s Reasons for Liking Peers Best

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N= 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive social skills</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good academic achievement</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High socio-economic status</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive physical attributes</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As clearly shown in Table 4, social skills category continued to attract interest among the majority of the children. In this category, cooperation in play and sharing are of greatest significance. For example, Paul, answering the question why he likes some peers best said, “We play football together in the field. He plays good games. “To the same question James said,” He loves me and I love him. When I ask him to give me something he gives me and I also give him”.

Academic achievement category had the second highest percentage in the question why children like peers best. The aspect of academic achievement that seemed to influence popularity in this category was helping in academic work. For example, Ann answering the question said, “She is a friend of all girls, she shows us Maths and English”.

4.2.5 Reasons Children Gave for Sharing Story Books with Peers

In responding to the question: "Which child in this class would you like to share your story books with?" Tell me why you share your storybooks with this child"

Children’s responses to this question appear in Table 5.

Table 5: Percentage Distributions of Children’s Reasons for Choosing to Share their Storybooks with Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N=124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Social Skills</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good academic achievement</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High socio-economic status</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 5, social skills category scored more than fifty percent and so emerged as the most important factor that children consider when sharing their storybooks with peers. The skills of sharing and generosity are important as demonstrated by the following two examples. In answering the question already mentioned, Phillip said, “When I have a story book I give him and when he has a book he gives me to read”. Mary also said, “She shares everything with me”. Other aspects of social skills that the children mentioned were having self-discipline such that children do not disturb peers in class, and taking care of others in the class.
Academic achievement is also important for children when they are choosing who to give their storybooks to. From Table 5, we get that a great number of children would give their storybooks to those peers who are academically bright, and those who generally help others in their studies. In answering the question Jane said, “She is a bright girl, she helps me in reading”.

4.2.6 Reasons Children Gave for Sharing Sweets with Peers

In answering the question, “Which child in this class do you share sweets with.” Tell me why you share sweets with this child”. Children came up with the following reasons as presented in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N = 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive social skills</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High socio-economic status</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Academic achievement</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 6, social skills factors still emerged as the most important for children when they are deciding whom to share sweets with. Some of the specific social skills that the children mentioned were generosity and sharing. For example, responding to the question why she would share sweets with peers, Njeri said,
"She is my friend, she gave me her rubber forever". Amina said, "Marion shares her break with me always".

Social-economic status had the second highest percentage. Jude answering the question said, "His father has a car, sometimes he asks my father permission and takes us to village market".

### 4.2.7 Reasons Children Gave for Lending Pencil-sharpener to Peers

Children’s responses to the question, "Which child in your class would you lend your pencil-sharpener? Tell me why you would lend your pencil-sharpener to this child". The responses are summarized in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N = 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Social skills</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good academic achievement</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High social-economic status</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After comparing the categories in Table 7, social skills category had the highest percentage of children who cited it. The skills the reasons provided are maintaining relationships and sharing. For example Amos, in answer to the
question said, "Peter is just a friend, we have been friends since I came to this school". Kibe answering the same question said, "He always thanks me when I give him my things". George on the other hand said, "Even him he gives me rubber".

Academic achievement was the second category with the highest percentage of children. Still answering the question why she would lend her pencil-sharpener to peers, Sara answered, "When the teacher gives us maths and I don't know how to do them, Jane shows me what to do".

4.2.8 Reasons Children Gave for Choosing to Visit Animal Orphanage with Peers

The percentage of children who gave reasons on the question, "Who in your class would you like to visit the animal orphanage with? Tell me why you would like to visit the animal orphanage with this child" appear in Table 8.

Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Children's Reasons for Choosing to Visit Animal Orphanage with Some Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N = 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive social skills</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good academic achievement</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good motor skills</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive physical attributes</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 8, the category with the highest score was the category of social skills. The aspect of social skills that appeared most important to children was maintenance of good relationships and being mindful of others. For example, Mary said, "When she wants to go somewhere she tells me to go with her. For example, she tells me to go to the toilet with her. Joe on his part said, "He is a good boy, he does not disturb anybody in class."

Academic achievement and proximity to residence had the same percentage. Regarding academic achievement reasons, John answered, "He can show me the animals I do not see and tells me no seeing and tell me their names". Similarly, Brian responded, "He likes animals, he likes reading storybooks on animals, he even has many storybooks on animals". In relation to proximity to residence, Paul said, "He is my neighbour and when it is Jamhuri Day, he comes to visit me at home and brings me many things like bananas and sweets".

4.2.9 Reasons Children Gave for Choosing to Share Stories with Some Peers

Children's answers to the questions, "Which child in your class do you share your stories with? Tell me why you share your stories with this child" are categorized in Table 9.
As clearly indicated in Table 9, the category that had the highest percentage of children who cited it was the social skill category. The skills mostly referred to by children were prudence and maintenance of good relationships. In answering the questions why she would share her stories with peers, Jean said, "When I tell her something, she doesn't spread to others". On the same note, Gladys said, "She isn't a bad girl, she doesn’t have bad manners for she doesn’t go tell other people". The second important category was proximity to residence. In response to the same question, David said, "When we are going home, we go together".

4.2.10 Reasons Children Gave for Sharing Lunch with Peers

The last question that sought to find out the factors that underlie popularity was to "Which child in your class would you like to share your lunch with? Tell me why would like to share your lunch with this child". The responses that children gave appear in Table 10.
Table 10: Percentage Distribution of Children's Reasons For Choosing to Lunch With Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N = 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive social skills</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social skills category scored almost hundred percent in the question why children choose to share their lunch with peers. The reasons provided by the children mostly referred to skill of sharing and generosity. In their responses to the said question, children for example, Agnes said, "I would share my lunch with her because she also shares everything with me". Most children mentioned sharing of food and snacks as very important to them. In her answer Teresia commented, "Sometimes when we are going home from school, she asks her father to give me a lift in their car, she is a very kind girl". Still responding to the same question, Michael answered, "I always play football with him and he doesn’t kick my leg". Fred on his part responded, "When we are playing in the field and he is defeated you tell him to get out of the game and he gets out and sits down",

4.3 Reasons Children Gave for Unpopularity

In an effort to elicit reasons that make children unpopular among their peers, three questions were used. Each item was analyzed separately since a child may be
unpopular in one situation and not in others. The breakdown of the reasons is as shown in the following sections.

4.3.1 Reasons Children Gave for Not Choosing to Play with Peers

When responding to the questions, "With whom in your class would you not like to play? Tell me why you would not like to play with this child". Children came up with responses which were grouped into three categories (Table 11).

Table 11: Percentage Distribution of Children's Reasons for Not Choosing to Play with Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Percentage (N=124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of social skills</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative physical attributes</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor academic achievement</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The category with the highest percentage in Table 11 is the category of lack of social skills. In answering the question why he would not like to play with peers, Mark said, "When we are playing the ball in the field, he kicks me down and I fall". Responding to the same question Naomi said, "When we are playing and she falls down, she cries and says that I fell her down and it is a lie." There are two skills that the responding children have mentioned, namely: aggression, and lack of co-operation in play.
Negative physical attributes and poor academic achievement had almost the same percentage. When talking about poor academic achievement Esther commented, "I don't like to play with her because she is lazy, she does not finish the homework". On poor physical attributes Alex said, "She is always dirty and she smells urine".

4.3.2 Reasons Children Gave for Not Choosing to Sit with Peers

Children's responses to the question, "Who in your class would you not like to sit with? Tell me why you would not like to sit with this child" are in Table 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N = 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of social skills</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative physical attributes</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor academic achievement</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 shows that, lack of social skills had the highest percentage. This indicates that children do not like sitting with peers who lack social skills. Responding to the question why they would not like to sit with some peers, Mary said, "When we were in Standard two (2), I sat with her and she was a bad girl. She was telling me you are a fool and my enemy". Caro responding to the same question said, "She takes my snack and tomorrow she takes another girl's snack
and eats so we are left with nothing to eat". The lack of skills mentioned here are stealing, abusing and boasting.

Negative physical attributes had the second highest percentage. In answering the same question in reference, Tonny commented, "He smells very badly, he does not wash his body". Jimmy on the other hand said, "His uniform is torn".

4.3.3 Reasons Children Gave for Not Liking Other Children

In an attempt to find out why children don’t like certain peers in class, a guiding question was given. The question stated: "Which child in your class do you not like at all? Tell me why you don’t like this child at all". Several answers were given which were grouped into categories as summarized in Table 13.

Table 13: Percentage Distribution of Reasons Children Gave for Not Liking Other Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage (N = 124)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of social skills</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative physical attributes</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor academic achievement</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 shows that most children cited lack of social skills as a reason for liking other peers. In responding to the question already mentioned, Judy said, "She is a bad girl, she tells somebody, Kwenda huko (Kiswahili phrase that means, "go
away”). Ann also retorted, "Sometimes she shouts at me and tells me that she doesn’t want to see my face”. In answer to the same question Richard said, "He has bad manners, he beats somebody for nothing". From the answers given above, it is clear that children do not like aggressiveness.

Negative physical attributes had the second highest percentage. Mutuku commenting on the question said, "His nose has makamasi (Kiswahili word for mucus) always and he doesn’t use a handkerchief".

4.4 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Peers’ Popularity

Data were also analyzed to ascertain if there were differences in the reasons boys and girls give for peers’ popularity. Ten items were used in trying to find out these differences. The results obtained are discussed below.

4.4.1 Sex Differences in the Reasons Children Gave for Choosing a Playmate

The reasons that boys and girls gave for choosing peers to play with were analyzed to find out if there were sex differences or not. Table 14 shows the results.
Table 14: Percentage Distribution of Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Choosing a Playmate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N =62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical attributes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2$ calculated = 20.2348*  $\chi^2$ critical = 11.070 df = 5  *Significant at 0.05

The Chi-square analysis showed that there was a significant difference between the kind of reasons boys and girls gave for choosing a playmate. The null hypothesis that boys and girls do not differ in the reasons they give for peers' popularity was therefore rejected. The percentage distribution also show that almost half of all the boys (48.4%) cited reasons that fell under social skills as compared to 40.3% of the girls. Again, more girls (25.8%) as compared to boys (16.1%) cited reasons that fell under the academic achievement category.

4.4.2 Sex Difference in Reasons Children Gave for Choosing a Sitting Mate

The reasons which children gave for choosing a sitting mate were analyzed to find out if there were sex differences. The findings are presented in Table 15.
Table 15: Percentage Distribution of Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Choosing a Sitting Mate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N = 62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor skills</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2_{calculated} = 5.857$  \hspace{1cm} $\chi^2_{Critical} = 9.488$  \hspace{1cm} df = 4

The Chi-square analysis of reasons boys and girls gave for choosing a sitting mate shows that there were no gender differences. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. Thus, there was no significant difference in responses given by boys from those cited by girls. (P<0.05).

From Table 15, however, more than half of all the boys (54.8%) as compared to 38.7% of the girls cited reasons that fell under the social skill category. Again, more girls (45.2%) than boys (32.3%) gave reasons that fell under academic achievement category.

4.4.3 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Inviting Peers to Their Homes

After analyzing the reasons boys and girls gave for inviting peers to their homes, the following results in Table 16 were received.
Table 16: Percentage Distribution of Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Inviting Peers to Their Homes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N=62)</th>
<th>Girls (N=62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2$ calculated = 6.0901   $\chi^2$ critical = 9.488   df=4

A Chi-square analysis of the reasons boys and girls gave for inviting peers to their homes showed that there were no sex differences (P<0.05). The null hypothesis which stated that boys and girls do not differ in the reasons they give for peers' popularity was accepted.

From the percentage distributions more boys (54.8%) as compared to girls (43.5%) cited reasons related to social skills. Also in the category of reasons related to proximity of residence, there were more girls (41.9%) as compared to boys (27.4%).

4.4.4. Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Liking Some Peers Best

The reasons children gave for liking some peers best were analyzed on the basis of sex using a Chi-square test. The hypothesis stated that, male and female do not
differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers’ popularity. The results are shown in Table 17.

**Table 17: Percentage Distribution of Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Liking Some Peers Best**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N = 62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² calculated = 9.4285  \( \chi^2 \) critical = 9.48  df = 4

From Table 17, there were no gender differences in the reasons boys and girls gave for liking peers (P<0.05). The null hypothesis that male and female do not differ in the reasons they give for peers’ popularity was accepted. However, more boys (74.1%) than girls (61.3%) cited social skills acquisition as a prerequisite for liking some peers best.

In academic achievement category, more girls (22.6%) than boys (16.1) cited reasons that are related to this category as important when deciding which peers to like best. However, the conclusion that can be made from the percentage differences in Table 17 is that while boys value social skills, girls on the other
hand prefer academic achievement aspects, although this preference is not statistically significant.

4.4.5 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Sharing Books with Some Peers

The reasons children gave for choosing to share storybooks with peers were analyzed on the basis of gender to find out if boys and girls in the reasons they gave for peer popularity. The results are given in Table 18.

Table 18: Percentage Distributions of Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Choosing to Share Storybooks With Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N = 62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² calculated = 7.1233  df = 3  χ² critical = 7.815

The analysis of categories in Table 18 shows that there were no sex differences in the reasons boys and girls gave for choosing to share storybooks with peers. The null hypothesis that stated: "Male and female do not differ in the reasons they gave for peers popularity" was accepted (P<0.05).
In the two top categories, the percentage analysis shows that there are differences between the reasons boys and girls gave for choosing to share storybooks with peers. For example, more boys (72.6%) than girls (51.6%) cited social skills while girls who cited academic achievement are however more (40.3%) than the boys (24.2%).

4.4.6 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave For Choosing To Share Sweets with Peers

The reasons children gave for choosing to share sweets with peers were grouped into categories. These categories were then analyzed on basis of sex using a Chi-square test. The results are presented in Table 19.

Table 19: Percentage Distributions of Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Choosing to Share Sweets with Peers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N = 62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity in residence</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 \) calculated = 2.8086  df = 2  \( \chi^2 \) critical = 5.991  P<0.05

The results in Table 19 shows that boys and girls do not differ in the reasons they gave for choosing peers to share sweets with. The null hypothesis which stated that" Male and female do not differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers
popularity was accepted. However, some differences are found when we look at the percentages. For example, more girls (6.5%) than boys (1.6%) cited academic achievement. The other differences are in the category of social skills. In this category, more boys (93.5%) than girls (91.9%) mentioned reasons related to social skills.

4.4.7 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Lending Pencil-sharpener to Peers.

Children's reasons for choosing to give peers pencil-sharpener were grouped into categories. These categories were then analyzed to find out if there were sex differences. The results are presented in Table 20.

Table 20: Percentage Distribution of Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Choosing to Lend Pencil-sharpener to Peers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N = 62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity in residence</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² calculated = 0.8392  df = 3  χ² critical = 7.815

The analysis of categories on reasons boys and girls gave for choosing to lend pencil-sharpener to peers in Table 20 shows that there are no sex differences in the reasons boys and girls gave for choosing to give pencil-sharpener to peers.
The null hypothesis which stated that boys and girls do not differ in the reasons they give for peers' popularity was accepted (P<0.05). However, in the category of academic achievement more boys (19.4%) than girls (14.5%) cited academic achievement. The other categories have just very minimal differences.

4.4.8 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Choosing to Visit Animal Orphanage

The reasons boys and girls gave for choosing peers with whom to visit the Langata animal orphanage were analyzed to find out if there were sex differences. The results are presented in Table 21.

Table 21: Percentage Distributions of Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Choosing to Visit Animal Orphanage with Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N = 62)</th>
<th>Girl (N=62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical attributes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2$ calculate = 5.5756  df=5  $\chi^2$ critical= 11.070  P<0.05

After analyzing the categories on reasons boys and girls gave for choosing peers to visit animal orphanage with, the results in Table 21 show that there are no sex
differences. The null hypothesis that male and female do not differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers' popularity was accepted.

The percentages indicate that more boys (83.9%) than girls (71.0%) cited social skills. Another difference was in proximity to residence whereby more girls (11.3%) than boys (6.5%) cited reasons related to this category.

4.4.9 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Sharing Stories with Peers

The reasons that boys and girls gave for choosing peers to share stories with were analyzed to find out whether there were sex differences. The analysis of the results is presented in Table 22.

Table 22: Percentage Distributions of Categories on Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Choosing to Share Stories with Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N = 62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>90.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical attributes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² calculated = 2.2  df = 2  χ² = critical = 7.815  P<0.05

The results of data analysis in table 22 show that, there were no sex differences in reasons boys and girls gave for choosing peers to share stories with. Therefore, the
null hypothesis that boys and girls do not differ in the reasons they give for peers’ popularity was accepted. However, from the table some differences are noted whereby 4.8% of boys and only 1.6% of girls cited academic achievement. Another difference noted was miscellaneous, namely 4.8% of girls and 3.2% of the boys cited reasons related to this category. On social skills category both boys and girls had a tie of 90.3%.

4.4.10 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave For Choosing to Share Lunch with Peers

The reasons children gave for choosing peers to share lunch with were grouped into categories which were then analyzed to find out if there were any sex differences or not. The results are presented in Table 23.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N =62)</th>
<th>Girls (N =62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² calculated = 1.0084 df = 2 χ² critical = 5.991 P < 0.05

After analyzing the data in table 23, the results indicate that there were no gender differences in the reasons boys and girls give for choosing peers to share lunch
with. The null hypothesis that male and female do not differ in the reasons they give for peers’ popularity was accepted.

4.5 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave For Peers

Unpopularity

Like in popularity, data were analyzed to find out if there were sex differences in the reasons boys and girls give for peers’ unpopularity. Three questions or items were used and the results are presented in the following sections.

4.5.1 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Not Choosing to Sit with Peers

The reasons that boys and girls gave for not choosing to sit with peers were analyzed to find out whether there were sex differences or not. The results are presented in Table 24.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N = 62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of social skills</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative physical attribute</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor academic achievement</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² calculated = 9.7136* df = 2     χ² critical = 5.991  *Significance at P <0.05
The results of data in table 24 show that boys and girls differ in the kind of reasons they give for not choosing to sit with peers. The null hypothesis which states that boys and girls do not differ in the kind of reasons they give for peers’ unpopularity was rejected.

The percentages however indicate that more girls (79.0%) than boys (72.6%) cited the reason related to the category of social skills. Similarly, more boys (19.4%) than girls (11.3%) cited reasons related to negative physical attributes.

4.5.2. Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Not Liking Some Peers

Data were analyzed to find out if there were sex differences in the reasons children gave for not liking some peers. The results are presented in Table 25.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N = 62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of social skills</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>88.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative physical attributes</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor academic achievement</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 \) calculated = 10.5555* \hspace{1cm} df = 3 \hspace{1cm} \chi^2 \) critical = 7.815 *Significance at P<0.05
The analysis of data in table 25 indicates that there are sex differences in reasons boys and girls gave for not liking some peers. Therefore, the hypothesis that boys and girls do not differ significantly in the reasons they give for peers unpopularity was rejected.

The category of lack of social skills has the highest percentages of boys and girls who cited it. In this category, more girls (88.7 %) than boys (71.0 %) cited lack of social skills as a reason why they would not choose peers to play with. Another notable difference can be seen in the category of negative attributes where by 22.6% of boys and only 3.2 % of girls cited negative physical attributes.

4.5.3 Sex Differences in Reasons Children Gave for Not Choosing to Play with Some Peers

Data analysis was done on the categories of reasons children gave for not choosing peers to play with. The findings are in Table 26.

Table 26: Percentage Distributions of Reasons Boys and Girls Gave for Not Choosing to Play with Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Boys (N=62)</th>
<th>Girls (N = 62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of social skills</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative physical attributes</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor academic achievement</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2$ calculated = 3.7352  df = 2  $\chi^2$ critical = 5.991
The analysis of categories on reasons boys and girls gave for not choosing peers to play with in Table 26 shows that there was no significant differences. The null hypothesis that girls and boys differs significantly in the reasons they give for peers' unpopularity was therefore accepted. However, the percentages show that there are some differences. For example, 93.5% of boys and 82.3% of girls cited lack of social skills. The other two categories also show some percentage differences in the reasons boys and girls gave.

### 4.6 The Relationship Between Popularity and Academic Achievement

The third null hypothesis stated that there is no positive relationship between popularity and academic achievement. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (Pearson 'r') was computed. This was done by correlating the total academic scores with the total positive nomination scores. A correlation coefficient of .2929 was obtained and a Critical value (CV) was .195. Since .2929 > .195, the relationship between popularity and academic achievement was therefore significantly different from .00. This means that as one variable increases the other increases. For example, as popularity increases, the academic achievement becomes better.
4.7 The Relationship between Unpopularity and Academic Achievement

The fourth null hypothesis stated that there is no significant negative relationship between unpopularity and academic achievement. Like in popularity, the negative nominations of all the children were summed up to get one single unpopularity score. Then the academic scores of all the children were also summed up. The total unpopularity scores and the total academic achievement scores were therefore correlated. The results gave a correlation coefficient of -.3476 and a CV of -.232. Since -.3576 correlation >-.232 the relationship between unpopularity and academic achievement was therefore found to be negatively related. This could mean that the more a child becomes unpopular, the poorer his or her academic score becomes.

4.8 Summary of the Results

From the results that have been presented in this chapter, positive social skills emerged as the most important factor that contributes to popularity among children. Reasons related to positive social skills that the children mentioned most were sharing things generally, being cooperative in play, and helping others generally. The other important factors that featured were good academic achievement, (for example helping others in academic work) and proximity to residence.
The most important factor that contributes to unpopularity was lack of social skills. For example, children cited aggression, most of which includes beating and fighting with other children. Lack of cooperation in play was also mentioned.

The study found that there were sex differences in the reasons boys and girls gave for choosing a playmate. Similarly, sex differences were found in reasons boys and girls gave for not liking some peers, and also in not choosing peers to sit with. In other words, the kind of reasons boys and girls gave in the above situations were not the same.

On the relationship between popularity and academic achievement, the study found a significant positive relationship between these two variables. Unpopularity among children was also found to be significant and negatively related to academic achievement. Thus, as popularity increases, academic achievement becomes better also. Again as the child becomes unpopular, his/her academic performance tends to decrease.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this study was first, to establish the factors that make children popular or unpopular among their peers. Second, the study sought to establish if there were sex differences in reasons boys and girls assign to peers’ popularity and unpopularity. Third, the study tried to establish whether there was any relationship between popularity and academic achievement; and between unpopularity and academic achievement.

5.2 Discussion

Popularity among children has been described by psychologists as an important aspect in children’s life and especially for peer relationships. For children to be able to cope properly with the rhythm of life and especially among peers certain skills are needed to establish and maintain these relationships. Among the skills that this study came up with were social skills. The study generally demonstrated that social skills are crucial in social interaction of children. The specific social skills that came up repeatedly from the children were sharing (of good things), playing co-operatively, and helping peers. These findings confirm other studies (e.g. Pettit et al 1996; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992) that have found social skills to be important aspects of peers’ popularity. A possible explanation for popular children’s acquisition of social skills could be that, according to Bowlby’s theory
of attachment, children who have an established security of a happy family have
the confidence to make social contacts with others. Further, parents who are warm,
friendly people who make friends easily often pass this on to their children.

Academic achievement also emerged as an important contributor to peer’s
popularity. This could be because as children set out to go to school, most parents
probably impress in their children that they should strive to perform well
academically. Teachers equally reward children’s good performance either
verbally or materially. It could therefore be from teachers and parents that children
come to realize that good academic achievement is rewarded. Popular children
might therefore work hard to perform well in their studies or those children who
perform well academically might impress other children who as a result make
them popular. Another possible explanation for good academic performance could
be that popular children have enough resources for example textbooks and other
learning materials which enhance their good performance (Maundu, 1986). The
finding that academic achievement is an important factor in peers’ popularity
however, is supported by past studies. For example, Vosk et al. (1982) advance
that children favour peers who are academic achievers, that is children who
perform well in their studies.

Over eighty percent of all the children cited lack of social skills as the cause of
unpopularity among peers. The negative skills that children cited most were
abusing, beating, and fighting (aggression). The possible explanation of aggression in unpopular children could be that, these children may have been made to feel inadequate or may have lived with hostility and therefore, tried to relieve their feelings on others who are weaker than they are. It is also probable that these children are neglected or bullied over, or under-disciplined at home. The jealousy they feel for their brothers or sisters may have turned into aggression towards others. Pettit et al. (1996); Ladd (1983) found that rejected children spent time engaging in antagonistic behaviours such as rough play and other socially inappropriate ways. Similarly, Dishon (1990) who found that rejected boys and girls had poor discipline skills for example disrupting others in class. Further, Attachment theory by Bowlby (1969, 1973) also suggests that children who are not allowed to mix or who are not taught to be aware of other people can become selfish and may develop antisocial attitudes in late life.

The study found that there were sex differences in the reasons boys and girls gave for choosing peers to sit with, and not liking some peers. A possible explanation of these sex differences could be due to parental and societal expectations which differ for the sexes and presumably are differentially rewarded. The results support those of Shantz and Hartup (1992); Maccoby (1990) who found that boys and girls are concerned with different issues in their relationships.
The study also established that there was a positive relationship between popularity and academic achievement. Probably the popular children are outgoing such that they have courage to seek for help from both teachers and fellow children in the class. This could mean that if the popular children do not understand what the teacher is teaching, they have to seek for more clarification from the teacher and the other children. The study confirms previous findings for example those by Kochenderfer and Coleman (1990), Friedman and Koch (1985); and Forehead et al. (1982) who found that academic achievement was positively related to popularity.

The study established that there was a negative relationship between unpopularity and academic achievement. This relationship could exist probably because the unpopular child is reserved or not open enough such that he or she cannot ask for help whenever they do not understand properly what the teacher is teaching. Another possible explanation for the negative relationship between unpopularity and academic achievement could be that unpopular children might not have friends who they can share together especially subject contents that are difficult. It could also be that, since they are aware of others not liking them, they could deliberately decide not to care much about their academics. Similarly, unpopular children might be preoccupied with destructive behaviours in the classroom, which will deter them from listening to the teacher. Kupersmidt et al. (1990) found that children who socialize poorly with the peers experience academic difficulties.
Similarly, Leonoff (1993) found that both boy and girl under-achievers were unpopular among their peers.

5.3. Implications and Recommendations

Since social skills were found to be very important for children’s popularity, this finding implies that parents should stress the importance of acquiring social skills by their children. For example, parents should encourage their children to learn to share whatever they have with their classmates. Parents should also instill in their children the value of playing co-operatively with other children. For example, parents could instruct their children that when playing the ball or any other game they should aim at the ball or the particular object and avoid kicking their playmates.

Teachers have equally a responsibility of helping and encouraging children to develop and value social skills. For example, teachers should encourage shared activities in the classroom and outside the classroom especially during play. This means that teachers will be keen to identify those children who lack social skills so that they can help them.

Curriculum planners and educators should design programmes that will help teachers deal with children who lack social skills. These should be skills that
teachers can use in training the unpopular children so that they can better socialize with the other children within and outside the classroom setting. This means that apart from designing programmes, time should be set-aside in the timetable when the social skills can be taught. Similarly, guidance and counseling personnel in primary schools should be involved in helping children who lack social skills. The personnel should also have programmes, which can help all children generally in development and maintenance of social skills.

This study also found that children who perform well academically were popular among their peers. This implies that if academic achievement is that important for children’s popularity, something has to be done to improve the performance of under-achievers. For example, teachers should do extra coaching for those children who are poor performers.

Parents of children who perform poorly academically should be encouraged by the teachers to provide textbooks for their children so that they can be reading ahead of the teacher and this way might help improve their performance. Teachers should also encourage children to share the resources available. For example, children who have textbooks should be encouraged to share them with those who do not have. Headteachers should also encourage parents and the local community to help in equipping the schools with books so that all children can have access to this facility.
The research showed that proximity to residence was also important in peers' popularity. This calls for parents to establish good neighbourliness so that their children may continue being good friends in school. Parents should also encourage their children to associate more with other children from the same neighbourhood who attend the same school. Teachers should also find out which children come from the same neighbourhood and encourage them to be friends.

Socio-economic skills featured among the factors that underlie popularity. This means that since parents are not the same financially, teachers should put a limit to the amount of money for buying snacks that children should take to school. Parents should avoid giving their children things that will make other children feel jealous. Since it is not possible to make all children the same in schools, parents should be encouraged to provide only the basic needs to their children and avoid giving things children can do without. Headteachers should also find ways of organizing for bursary funds which can cater for some basic needs of the poor children.

The above findings and recommendations are by no means a total panacea to the problems and issues associated with social competence skill development in children. There is need for further study to be undertaken to investigate on the role of teachers and parents in helping children attain social skills. Since the factors that contribute to popularity and unpopularity were researched from the children standpoint/angle only, this study suggests that another study should be carried out
and this time involve teachers so that the reasons for peer popularity/unpopularity from the teachers’ points of view can be compared. Popular/unpopular children's perception of school, teachers and the learning environment could also be investigated.
BIBIOGRAPHY


diversity and infant preferential social responses to attractive and unattractive faces. Developmental Psychology, 26, 153-159.


APPENDIX 1

SOCIOMETRIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Birth date: ___________________________ Sex (circle one): Male, female

School: ___________________________ Stream: ___________________________

1. With whom in this class would you like to play?
   ___________________________

   Tell me why you like to play with this child
   ___________________________
   ___________________________
   ___________________________

2. Who in this class would you like to sit with?
   ___________________________

   Tell me why you would like to sit with this child?
   ___________________________
   ___________________________
   ___________________________
3. Which child in your class would you like to invite to your home?

Tell me why you would like to invite this child to your home.

4. Who in your class do you like best?

Tell me why you like this child best.

5. Who would you like to visit the animal orphanage with?

Tell me why you would like to visit the animal orphanage with this child.

6. Which pupil in this class do you share your sweets with?
Tell me why you share your sweets with this child


7. Which child in this class do you share your storybooks with?

Tell me why you share your storybooks with this child


8. Which child in your class would you like to share your lunch with?

Tell me why you would like to share your lunch with this child


9. Which child in your class would you lend your pencil sharpener?

Tell my why you would lend your pencil sharpener to this child


10. Which child in your class would you share your stories with?

Tell me why you would share your stories with this child.

11. Which child in your class do you like the least?

Tell me why you like this child least

12. With whom in your class would you not like to play?

Tell me why you would not like to play with this child
13. Who in your class would you not like to with?

Tell me why you would not want to sit with this child

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________