

**TEACHER INTERVENTION STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG  
LEARNERS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DISORDERS IN SELECTED  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS, NAIROBI CITY COUNTY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of my original research work and has not been presented in any other university/institution for consideration of any certification. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussion. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Education (Special need education) in the School of Education Kenyatta University.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my dear husband, Moses whose support and unfailing encouragement have seen me this far. To you, I am invaluablely indebted.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ANOVA</b>	Analysis of Variance
<b>EBDs</b>	Emotional and Behavioural Disorders
<b>IEP</b>	Individual Education Plan
<b>MKO</b>	More Knowledgeable Other
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<b>SSRS</b>	Social Skills Rating System
<b>VAS</b>	Vanderbilt Assessment Scale
<b>ZPD</b>	Zone of Proximal Development
<b>NACOSTI</b>	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation

## ABSTRACT

High-profile disruptive behaviours, many of which are attributed to emotional and behavioural disorders (EBDs), are a common occurrence in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi City County, Kenya. Strategies to enhance social skills may help learners with EBDs improve their behaviour. However, the evidence of the use of such strategies in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County is currently lacking. This study, therefore, investigated teacher intervention strategies to improve social skills among learners with EBDs in selected primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County. The objectives were to identify the social skill deficits, determine teacher competencies in facilitating social skills, establish intervention strategies that teachers use to influence social skills, and find out the challenges encountered by teachers in promoting social skills for learners with EBDs in these schools. The study, which was guided by Vygotsky's Theory of Social Development, employed descriptive survey design using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The target population comprised 39 administrators, 239 teachers, and 10,571 learners in 7 public, regular primary schools in Kayole Zone, Embakasi Sub-County. Following a scrutiny of the institutions' 'black books,' the population was narrowed to class seven learners in two schools, purposively selected because they had the highest number of behavioural cases in the zone. The two schools had 12 administrators, 74 teachers, and 363 class seven learners, out of which 47 were identified as having EBDs. The initial sample included all the 12 administrators, 23 teachers selected through a stratified random process, and all the 47 learners with EBDs. Of these, 8 administrators, 16 teachers, and the 47 learners took part in the study. A structured questionnaire, which also had the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS), and interviews were used to collect data. Instrument validity was achieved by ensuring that they adequately captured the research variables. For reliability, the test-retest procedure was used and a correlation coefficient of 0.83 was achieved. Quantitative data was analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, the independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA. All analyses were done in SPSS (v. 21) and findings presented using tables and graphs. Qualitative data was analysed thematically and presented narratively. The mean SSRS score for the learners was 12.64 ( $SD = 3.54$ ), indicating very low social skills. Teachers had, on average, a low competency in identifying learners with EBDs, with a significant difference observed between those with and those without a formal training in EBD management ( $t = 5.25, p < 0.001$ ). Teachers rarely used recommended intervention strategies for EBDs. The most salient challenges included a lack of specialised training, issues with school/class environmental management, difficulties adapting the curriculum and instructional methods, problems with identifying learners with EBDs, and inadequate instructional resources. From the findings, it can be concluded that the majority of teachers in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County have low competencies in facilitating social skills among learners with EBDs and, instead, rely mostly on ineffective strategies. The government should ensure regular effective training for these teachers to equip them with the skills and competencies needed to address the needs of learners with EBDs.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The World Health Organisation (2024) reports that worldwide, about 14% (approximately 185 million) of school-age children and adolescents (10-19 years) have mental disorders, many of which remain untreated or unrecognised. The largest share of this population comprises persons with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBDs). Emotional and behavioural disorders constitute a category within mental health conditions characterised by significant and persistent deviations in expected emotional or behavioural patterns, severely interfere with a person's social and other daily life functions, and, in often cases, create distress to others (Ogundele et al., 2018). Within educational contexts, Dulas et al. (2025) define an EBD as a disability characterised by behavioural or emotional responses in school schedules so different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norms. These disorders can broadly be categorised as internalising (those focusing on oneself) or externalising problems (those exhibited when one interacts with their social environments) (Ogundele et al., 2018). Aside from this broad classification, several EBDs have been specified, including depression, anxiety disorders, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorders, trauma-related conditions, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and conduct disorder.

Meeting the needs of learners with EBDs remains a significant challenge for basic education systems worldwide (Brigham et al., 2024). These individuals often contend with significant difficulties building and maintaining productive social relationships, regulating their emotions, following classroom or school rules, and coping with school-related stresses (Dulas et al., 2025). The combination of these factors may have profound effects on their social lives, academic achievements, and overall educational experiences (Brigham et al., 2024). However, with timely,

appropriate, and targeted interventions, educators can help learners with EBDs successfully navigate through their problems, manage disruptive behaviours, foster positive social interactions, and improve their academic achievements (Casey et al., 2012; Smith & Johnson, 2021).

An area that could be a prime target of such interventions is improving their social skills. Social skills encompass abilities that allow people to interact effectively with their social environment (Reyes et al., 2020). They include communication (non-verbal and verbal), leadership, emotional regulation, cooperation, empathy, conflict resolution, assertion, and ability to adapt to varied social situations. There is sufficient evidence of a strong link between a person's social skills and their behaviour. Specifically, individuals with high social skills tend to have a low risk of engaging in problematic behaviours (Reyes et al., 2020; Runjić et al., 2015). The extant literature further shows that learners with EBDs have significant social skill deficits (Casey et al., 2012; Smith & Johnson, 2021). Taken together, these two observations imply that intervention strategies to improve social skills for learners with EBDs can be instrumental in lowering their problematic behaviours and enhancing their school experiences. Implementing such interventions, in turn, requires teachers to be competent in handling members of this population (Kumm et al., 2021).

Globally, there are increasing calls for schools to develop intervention strategies to address social skill deficits of learners with EBDs (Casey et al., 2012; Sheaffer et al., 2021; Smith & Johnson, 2021). In the United States, for instance, about 475,000 school-going children are diagnosed with an EBD and exhibit a range of social skill deficits that affect their performance in various functioning areas, including social interactions, behaviour, and academic achievements (Deng et al., 2023; Staley, 2024). Learners with EBDs in the country are also at higher risks of dropping out of school, incarceration, and unemployment compared to other disability categories (Page,

2023). In response to these calls, there has been a notable progress toward social skills training programmes for learners with EBDs in the country (Kumm et al., 2021). Still, there are concerns that teachers in the United States are yet to fully embrace systematic education for enhancing social skills to members of this population (Kumm et al., 2021).

In Sweden, Andersson et al. (2022) found that social skills training improved peer relationships and increased classroom participation for learners with EBDs. However, teachers reported challenges in maintaining engagement without specialised training. The interventions primarily involved role-playing, group activities, and teacher-facilitated discussions to enhance communication and cooperation. The authors did not report on teachers' competence in implementing these programmes. Similarly, In Italy, Rossi and Bianchi (2023) observed that while co-teaching methods, which entailed pairing general education teachers with special education professionals, promoted better social interaction for learners with EBDs, insufficient teacher preparedness hindered the success of these interventions. The study also highlighted the challenge of aligning teaching practices and the need for teacher training to improve intervention consistency and effectiveness. Both studies were conducted in highly developed countries and their findings may not reflect fully the situation in a developing country like Kenya, where teachers and learners contend against widespread obstacles to quality education.

In Brazil, a longitudinal study by Carvalho et al. (2021) revealed that teacher-led peer interaction programmes significantly improved communication and socialization among learners. These programmes incorporated structured play, collaborative learning activities, and social-emotional learning sessions. Teachers received periodic training to implement these strategies, which helped learners with EBDs nurture empathy, communication, and conflict-resolution skills. Still, the study

noted that the lack of continuous professional development and limited resources in public schools posed persistent challenges. Their findings demonstrate the importance of teacher training and competence in implementing interventions to improve learners' social skills. Although the context of this study was a developing country, it did not investigate the specific intervention strategies teachers put in place to facilitate social skill development among learners with EBDs.

Across Africa, Mthembu and Nkosi (2022) established that teachers in South Africa equipped with training in social-emotional learning reported notable improvements in learner interaction. Similar to Carvalho et al. (2021), the authors emphasised the importance of teacher competencies in developing and implementing social skill enhancement programmes. Despite these gains, the authors noted a significant gap in culturally responsive teaching materials and training programs tailored to the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of learners. This study was conducted in the general student population and was not particular to the interventions used for learners with EBDs. Similarly, in Uganda, Kanya et al. (2023) found that social interaction interventions, such as peer-mediated learning, significantly enhanced the social skills of learners with EBDs. Teachers implemented collaborative tasks, interactive games, and role-playing exercises to improve communication and social competence. Nonetheless, teachers cited the scarcity of teaching resources, large class sizes, and limited access to specialized training as major barriers to the sustainability of these interventions. This study did not report on social the skill levels of learners with EBDs in the sampled schools.

In Kenya, high-profile disruptive behaviours in schools, including defiance toward authority, unrests, and fighting, are a common occurrence, albeit with widespread disparities in their frequencies and intensities across different regions. Nairobi County, particularly Embakasi Sub-

County, has been spotlighted as among the areas with the highest number of cases of disruptive behaviours in schools in Kenya (Limisi et al., 2023; Wanjala et al., 2024). Factors that have been highlighted as contributing to disruptive behaviours in the country include peer pressure, socio-economic challenges, the absence of effective guidance and counselling programmes, and poor school climate (Limisi et al., 2023; Wanjala et al., 2024). A large number of these cases have also been attributed to EBDs (Magai et al., 2018; Mwangi et al., 2022). Although consolidated national data on learners with EBDs is currently lacking, prevalence rates ranging between 15% and 30% have been reported among primary school pupils in different parts of Kenya (Kariuki et al., 2017; Magai et al., 2018). However, these studies have limited geographical scopes and their findings may not necessarily reflect the experiences of learners with EBDs in other parts of the country.

Further, although various studies have documented the experiences of learners with EBDs (Gathua et al., 2015; Magai et al., 2018; Mboya et al., 2016; Rintaugu & King'endo, 2023), little is known about their social skill levels. There is also a dearth of research into the intervention strategies used to improve social skills among learners with EBDs and teacher competencies in facilitating such skills. Mwangi et al. (2022) reported that most teachers in Nairobi County lacked specialised training and had low competence in EBD interventions. The interventions employed included structured play activities, story-based learning, and cooperative learning tasks. However, teachers expressed concerns about inadequate instructional materials and insufficient professional development opportunities in this area. This study did not assess the social skills of learners with EBDs, neither did it investigate the strategies employed by teachers to enhance them.

Similarly, Ochieng and Akinyi (2023) examined interventions used in inclusive classrooms in Kisumu County, concluding that while structured play activities improved social interaction,

inconsistent application of strategies diminished effectiveness. The authors found that teachers often relied on unstructured methods due to the absence of standardised guidelines for supporting learners with EBD. In another study, Kiprop et al. (2024) established that teachers in primary schools in Nakuru County faced challenges such as inadequate resources and lack of administrative support when implementing social interaction interventions. The interventions included role-playing, social stories, and visual schedules. Teachers reported that administrative support, in terms of training and the provision of instructional resources, was crucial for the successful implementation of these strategies. Neither of these studies investigated social skill levels of learners with EBDs, teachers' competencies in enhancing them, and the intervention strategies used toward this end.

In sum, little is known about the strategies teachers in Kenya use to facilitate social skills among learners with EBDs. There is also limited research on teacher competencies in promoting social skills in this population. This gap is noteworthy considering the high prevalence of disruptive behaviours in schools in the country and the evidence that social skills are a strong predictor of their likelihood to engage in such behaviours (Reyes et al., 2020; Runjić et al., 2015). Consequently, strategies to enhance social skills are valuable tools for combating behaviour problems among learners with EBDs, as well as, enhancing their academic achievements and overall educational experiences. Drawing on this gap, this study investigated the intervention strategies to improve social skills among learners with EBDs in public primary schools in Kenya, focusing on Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi City County, which has one the highest exposures to school-based disruptive behaviours in the country (Limisi et al., 2023; Wanjala et al., 2024).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Learners with EBDs often engage in a wide range of disruptive behaviours that may have profound effects on their social lives, academic achievements, and overall educational experiences. It is known that having strong social skills may lower a person's risk of engaging in problematic behaviours. However, a large body of literature indicates that learners with EBDs have significant social skill deficits. Consequently, intervention strategies to enhance social skills among these learners may be instrumental in lowering their problematic behaviours and improving their educational experiences.

In Kenya, high-profile disruptive behaviours in schools are a common occurrence, many of which are attributed to EBDs. While several studies have documented the experiences of learners with EBDs in the country, little is known about the intervention strategies teachers utilise to enhance social skills for this population. The need to address this gap is crucial, as unresolved social deficits not only impede academic progress, but also increase the likelihood of antisocial behaviour and societal maladjustment. To contribute to minimising this gap, the current study investigated the teacher intervention strategies to improve social skills among learners with EBDs in primary schools in Kenya, focusing on Embakasi Sub-County in Nairobi City County. The findings may provide valuable information that policymakers, educators and other stakeholders could use to develop more effective, evidence-based strategies to enhance social skills among learners with EBDs in Embakasi Sub-County and other parts of the country.

### **1.2.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the intervention strategies teachers use to improve social skills among learners with EBDs in selected primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi City County.

### **1.2.2 Objectives of the Study**

The study addressed the following objectives:

1. To identify the social skill deficits of learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County.
2. To determine teacher's competencies in facilitating social skills of learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County.
3. To establish intervention strategies that teachers use to influence social skills of learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County.
4. To find out the challenges encountered by teachers in promoting social skills among learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County.

### **1.2.3 Research Questions**

1. Which are the social skills deficits among learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County?
2. To what extent are teacher competent in facilitating social skills of learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County?

3. What are the effective intervention strategies teachers could use to influence social skills in learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County?
4. What are the challenges encountered by teachers in promoting social skills among learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County?

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study may significantly benefit policymakers, particularly the Ministry of Education, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, and the Teacher's Service Commission. The results may provide valuable insights into the current challenges surrounding social interaction among learners with EBDs. This information could be instrumental in guiding the development of policies and strategies aimed at improving educational practices and outcomes for learners with EBDs in primary schools within Nairobi County and beyond.

Practicing teachers may benefit from the study's findings by gaining a better understanding of effective intervention strategies for supporting social interaction in learners with EBDs. The study offers practical recommendations for managing social skill deficits within classroom settings, enhancing teacher confidence and competence in addressing the diverse needs of these learners. Additionally, the Teachers Service Commission may use the findings as a resource for teacher training programs and continuous professional development initiatives.

Furthermore, the study's findings may be of great value to teacher training institutions. By providing empirical evidence on effective intervention strategies, the research can inform curriculum development and training programs for teachers, ensuring they are better equipped to support learners with EBDs. Non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders involved in

educational support and advocacy may also find the study useful in tailoring their interventions to meet the unique needs of this learner population more effectively.

## **1.4 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

### **1.4.1 Limitations**

This study was done as part of a requirement for the fulfilment for the award of a master's degree in a Kenyan university. The time available to prepare, conduct, record, code and analyse the data needed to achieve the objectives was short due to restrictions imposed by the university's guidelines for such a study. However, the researcher used due diligence to optimise the available time. Some participants were reluctant to fill in the questionnaires used to collect data, while others were not willing to disclose their personal data such as age and levels of education. The researcher assured them of confidentiality to enhance their participation. The researcher also encouraged them by explaining to them the importance of the study and assuring them that the information they provided would be used only for the purpose of this study.

The researcher relied on teachers to identify learners with EBDs and rate their social skills using previously validated tools. It is possible the teachers misidentified some learners with EBDs or biasedly reported on their social skills. To minimise these limitations, the researcher worked closely with the teachers to identify the learners and guided them in using the screening tools to ensure the information they provided was as accurate as possible.

### **1.4.2 Delimitations of the Study**

The study was confined to two regular primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi County. Embakasi was chosen due to the high number of cases of disruptive behaviours in the sub-country.

However, the focus on these two schools may make it difficult to generalise the findings to special education or other regular primary schools in the sub-county.

The study was limited to upper classes, specifically class seven. This is because most serious reported cases that were indicated in the schools' behaviour inventories were from this class. Additionally, the study was on EBDs, not other disability categories. Besides, it focused on primary schools and, therefore, the findings may not apply to secondary schools in the sub-county.

The range of social skills is broad. However, this study focused only on five specific skills, namely, empathy, self-control, assertion, responsibility, and cooperation. The focus on these five was because the instrument used to measure social skills, the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS-T) (Gresham & Elliot, 1990), covers only these dimensions. The focus on these five implies that findings may not reflect fully on other specific social skills. Still, all the five are of high relevance to learners with EBDs and have been shown to reflect, directly or indirectly, a wide range of other dimensions of social skills (Diperna & Volpe, 2005; Eslami et al., 2014).

### **1.5 Assumption**

The researcher made the following assumptions:

1. Respondents were honest in their answering questions on questionnaires.
2. Teachers identified all learners with persistent disruptive behaviours in their classes and correctly identified those with EBDs
3. The social skills assessment tool was accurate and correctly identified learners' skill deficits

## **1.6 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

### **1.6.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted the Social Development Theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). This theory posits that social interactions are fundamental to cognitive development, emphasizing the crucial role of social relationships in learning (Moore et al., 2019). The theory is a cornerstone of constructivism, highlighting two major themes: the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky, children acquire cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative interactions with more knowledgeable individuals in their environment (McLeod, 2020). Social interaction, therefore, serves as the foundation for learning and development, as knowledge and skills are transferred from the social context to the individual cognitive level (Shaban & Ewing, 2016).

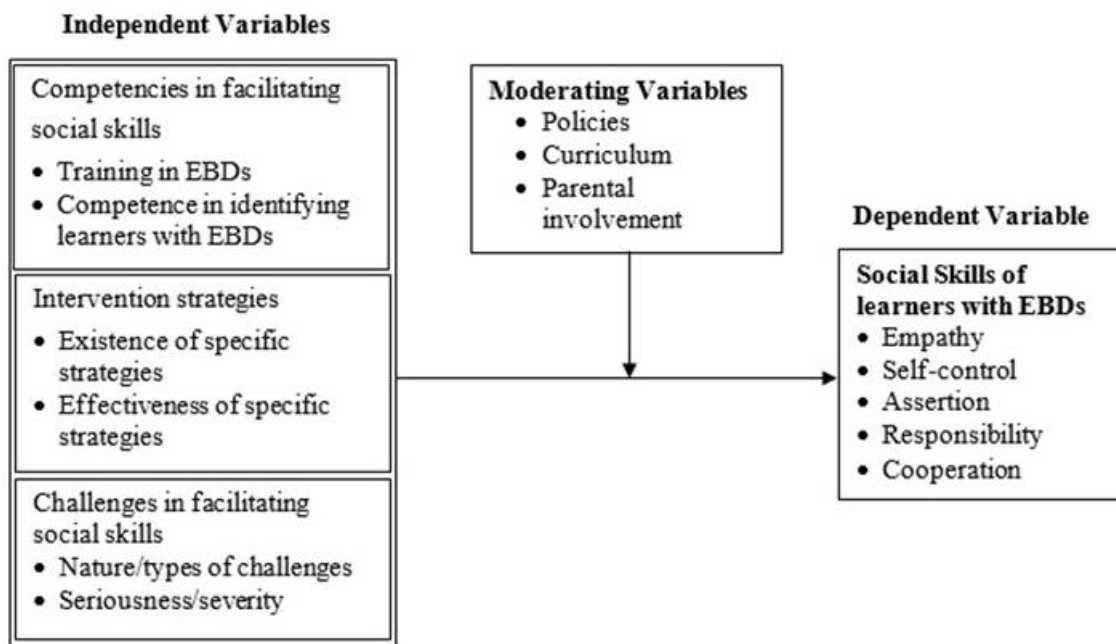
The Social Development Theory is directly relevant to this study, which investigates intervention strategies for promoting social skills among learners with EBDs. Teachers, as MKOs, play a significant role in guiding learners with EBDs to develop essential social skills. Through structured interaction, teachers can scaffold learning experiences that help these learners navigate social situations more effectively. The ZPD provides a framework for designing interventions that are neither too easy nor too challenging, ensuring that learners remain engaged and motivated to participate in social activities.

By applying Vygotsky's theory, this study sought to explore how teachers can effectively use intervention strategies to enhance social skills development in learners with EBDs. The findings offer insights into how teachers can identify learners' ZPD, apply appropriate scaffolding techniques, and gradually reduce support as learners become more independent. This theoretical

framework underpins the study's focus on the dynamic relationship between teacher strategies and social interaction, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes for learners with EBD in Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi City County.

### 1.6.2 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 shows the study variables and conceptualised relationships between them.



**Figure 1.1: Research Variables and Conceptualised Relationships between Them**

The study included a dependent and three independent variables. The dependent variable was manifestation of social skills among learners with EBDs. The study assessed five specific skills: empathy, self-control, assertion, responsibility, and cooperation. The empathy dimension is about respect and concern for others, self-control reflects a person's response in conflict situations, while assertion focuses on initiating skills. On its part, cooperation is about following rules, sharing things with others, and similar skills (Gresham & Elliot, 1990).

The independent variables included teacher competencies in facilitating social skills, intervention strategies, and challenges faced by teachers when teaching social skills to learners with EBDs. For competencies, the study investigated teachers' access to formal training in EBD management and perceived competency in identifying learners with these conditions. Four commonly recommended techniques were assessed: direct observations, interviewing, testing, and medical evaluation. Regarding the second variable, the study looked into the use and perceived effectiveness of various recommended intervention strategies. Finally, the challenges were conceptualised based on the nature and severity of various obstacles teachers encountered when promoting social skills among learners with EBDs in their schools.

## 1.7 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

The following are definitions of key terms as used in this study:

**Behaviour:** Any learning and/or social activity a learner in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County may engage in, inside and outside the classroom, but within a school setting, and which may be perceived by observers as either positive or negative.

**Behavioural difficulties/problems:** An umbrella term that covers misbehaviours, problem behaviour, socially unacceptable behaviour, maladjustment, deliberately disruptive behaviour, delinquent behaviour, anti-social behaviour, conduct disorders, and other abnormal behaviours exhibited by learners with EBDs in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County.

**Teacher competencies:** The set of knowledge, skills, and attributes that teachers in primary schools in Embakasi County need to effectively promote social skills among learners with EBDs. This study focuses mostly on teacher training and the knowledge and skills needed to identify learners with EBDs.

**Emotional and behaviour disorder:** A condition whereby inappropriate behaviours become chronic, persistent, affect learning and is socially unacceptable and/or unsatisfying, but which can be changed by teaching and challenging them into more socially acceptable and personally gratifying behaviours.

**Intervention/intervention strategy:** Any helping process the teacher may engage in or initiate with a view of helping learners with EBDs reduce, control, or modify inappropriate behaviour.

**Learners with EBDs:** Learners in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County identified by teachers as having an EBD based on an assessment tool administered by the researcher.

**Social skills:** Abilities that allow learners with EBDs in in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County to interact effectively with their social environment, which may include their peers, teachers, parents, and other individuals or groups.

**Social skills deficit:** A state in which a learner with an EBD fails to exhibit expected social skills, such as their ability to socially interact with others is significantly impaired.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Social Skills Deficits of Learner with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders**

In school contexts, social skills are vital for facilitating communication and interactions between learners and with their teachers (Casey et al., 2012). Learners with EBDs may, however, encounter unique challenges nurturing essential social skills, leading to significant deficits (Eren & Holmes, 2024; Sheaffer et al., 2021; Smith & Johnson, 2021). One of the most foundational social skills deficits is the failure to develop and maintain positive peer relationships. Learners with EBDs may connect socially but those interactions tend to be negative or aggressive, which, in many instances, lead to social isolation (Eren & Holmes, 2024).

In Germany, Weiss et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative incident analysis of emotional and behavioural problems exhibited by students in inclusive classes. They generated data through focus group discussions from a sample of 77 students in inclusive classrooms in a secondary school in the university. Their focus was on identifying critical incidents involving students' behaviours, underlying causes of these incidents, and the associated consequences. By thematically analysing the content of these interviews, the researchers isolated several critical incidents that were characterised by disruptive behaviours, displays of aggression towards peers and class mates and behaviours perceived as unusual. Notably, about 16% of these disruptive conducts were attributed to EBDs. Nevertheless, the study did assess the social skill deficits among those with EBDs that may have contributed to the identified behaviours. Besides, this study was conducted in secondary, not primary school settings.

Kang et al. (2022) in South Korea investigated the relationship between emotional competence and social depression and aggression among South Korean adolescents. Using structural equation

modelling, they analysed social competence levels, social support, aggression, and depression trends among a sample of 286 school students selected from three elementary schools in the country. A notable finding of the study was the establishment of significant relationships between social-emotional competence, aggressive, and depressive behaviours. These results suggest that learners with behavioural problems, specifically, depression and aggression, may be low social skills, specifically, social-emotional competence, defined as the ability to regulate emotions when interacting with people. Although this study assessed social skills among learners in primary schools, it did not focus on those with EBDs.

Another study by Smith and Johnson (2021) in the United States examined the impact of social skills training on learners with EBDs. The study found that structured social skills programs improved peer interactions and reduced aggressive behaviours. However, the study did not explore the specific strategies teachers used to facilitate these improvements, highlighting a gap in understanding the role of teachers' competencies. Additionally, the study was limited to urban schools, leaving rural contexts underexplored, which this study seeks to address.

A study by Okafor and Ibrahim (2022) in Nigeria assessed social interaction deficits among learners with EBD in inclusive classrooms. Employing a descriptive design, they generated views from a sample of 63 teachers selected from different schools in the country. Their findings indicated that a substantial proportion of learners in these schools exhibited behaviours consistent with EBDs that have profound impacts on their school activities. Yet, teachers faced challenges in adapting interventions to suit diverse learner needs. The study suggested the need for teacher training programs focused on differentiated social skills instruction. However, the authors did not

assess the social skill levels or deficits of learners with EBDs in these schools, which was a key focus area of the current study.

In South Africa, Moyo and Dlamini (2023) examined the influence of teacher-led interventions on social competence in EBD learners. The study highlighted the positive impact of cooperative learning activities but did not address the role of teacher competencies in tailoring these activities effectively. Furthermore, the study focused on upper primary learners, overlooking younger age groups. This research will consider learners across different age brackets to provide a more comprehensive understanding of social interaction development. An investigation by El-Sayed (2021) in Egypt explored the integration of emotional intelligence training into the curriculum for EBD learners. Results indicated improved social interactions; however, the study was limited to private schools, limiting its generalizability to public school contexts. Additionally, the study lacked information on the practical strategies teachers employed during the training, an aspect this study aims to explore.

Ndugwa and Ateenyi (2024) in Uganda analyzed the use of peer-assisted learning for social skills development. While the study found significant improvements in social engagement, it did not investigate the challenges teachers faced in implementing these strategies. Additionally, the study did not differentiate between rural and urban schools, which this study will address by considering schools in Embakasi sub-county. In Tanzania, research by Mushi (2023) examined teacher perceptions regarding social skills interventions. The study noted that teachers often lacked the necessary training and resources to implement effective strategies. However, the study did not examine how teacher beliefs and attitudes toward EBD learners influenced intervention outcomes. This study will bridge this gap by investigating teachers' perceptions and competencies together.

In Kenya, Kamau et al. (2022) focused on the impact of social skills training programs in Nairobi County. The study identified a positive relationship between structured training and improved peer interactions. However, it did not consider the influence of teacher interventions. Additionally, the study did not investigate the challenges teachers faced during implementation, an aspect this research will address. Similarly, Mutua and Wanjiru (2023) investigated the role of inclusive education practices in Embakasi sub-county. The findings indicated that teachers lacked specific strategies for addressing social interaction deficits in learners with EBD, emphasizing the need for more research into teacher-led interventions. However, the study primarily focused on classroom-based strategies, overlooking extracurricular interventions, which this study will explore. Limited focus on teacher competencies and intervention strategies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. This study sought to bridge these gaps by investigating teacher-led strategies for fostering social interaction in learners with EBD, focusing on Embakasi sub-county, Nairobi County.

## **2.2 Teacher's Competence in Facilitating Social Skills for Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders**

Studies show that a significant number of schools lack qualified teachers to teach learners with EBDs (De Swart, 2023; Smith et al., 2021). In many places globally, the provision of special education is faced with the challenges related to shortages of qualified, diverse, and reliable teachers who can work with such learners (De Swart, 2023). Effective identification of learners with EBDs is crucial for teachers to offer them quality education. Cumming et al. (2022) state that observation is one of the most widely utilized assessment methods, but that its accuracy depends more on the precision with which direct observation and recording are carried out. Students that exhibit emotional and behavioural disturbances can be monitored in settings that are more natural, such a classroom. Direct and continuous measuring has gained popularity as a way to evaluate

children with behavioural issues in recent years. By using this approach, the disruptive behaviours disturbed are clearly identified and observed daily in the classroom, where they typically take place. To determine frequency, consistency, and intensity, recordings are made.

In order to make an educated judgment, teachers use interviews as a method of assessment to get information from parents about their students (Merikangas, et al., 2022). According to research, interviews are useful since they give schedule detailed information that a questionnaire cannot supply (McConaughy & Whitcomb, 2022). The evaluation process is guided by facilitated interviews with teachers, parents, and students, which also address the concerns of everyone engaged with the learner. It paints a picture of how the informant sees students presenting issues (Forber-Pratt et al., 2022). Additionally, it offers details regarding the environmental setting in which the problematic behaviour is manifesting (Cassady, 2022).

Standardized tests compare a subject's performance to that of others who have taken the same test, whereas standardized tests include a consistent and uniform technique for administering, scoring, and interpreting the behaviour of the subject (Merikangas et al., 2022). Teachers evaluated students with specific behavioural issues using results from district exams. These assessments of cognitive capacity, academic performance (reading, writing, and math), and other problematic areas offered benchmarks and normative comparisons of learners' performance levels (Cassady, 2022). Therefore, the need in this work was to find the competent level of teachers and their preparedness level in using effective teaching strategies in teaching learners with EBD.

In the Netherlands, Breeman et al. (2015) examined how individual teacher characteristics influenced learners behavioural and social adjustments. They developed and tested two regression models predicting learners' social relationships and classroom adjustment. Using data from a

random sample of 144 learners, the authors established several significant individual-level and aggregate class-level relationships that are of interest to the current study. Firstly, teacher-learner closeness significantly predicted learners' social-emotional and behavioural adjustments. Secondly, teacher competence significantly predicted levels of social problems among learners through its effect on social relationships. Teacher competence was, in turn, influenced by their wellbeing and the nature of their relationships with learners. Their findings highlight the importance of teacher competencies in promoting social skills and positive behaviours among learners. However, their study was conducted in the general learner population and did not focus on those with EBDs.

A study by Smith et al. (2021) emphasizes the need for explicit social-emotional learning interventions for learners with EBDs, noting that these individuals often struggle with social competence, which affects their ability to engage successfully with peers. The study demonstrates that when teachers use structured social-emotional learning strategies, they can significantly enhance social skills in learners with EBD, thereby promoting more positive peer interactions. However, the study did not address how teachers' specific competencies and training in these areas influence their ability to deliver these strategies effectively. This gap highlights the need for localised research that delves into the specifics of teacher competencies in the Kenyan context.

In another study in the United States, Jones and Anderson (2020) focused on the need for social skills instruction for students with EBDs. Employing an extensive document review, they noted that teaching social skills is an essential component of behavioural interventions for these learners. The study found that effective social skills training may significantly improve students' abilities to engage in appropriate social behaviours. Despite these findings, the study did not explore the

specific competencies teachers require to effectively implement such training. This gap in literature underscores the importance of investigating teachers' competencies in facilitating social skills among learners with EBD in the Kenyan primary school setting, a focus of the current study.

In Australia, Odescalchi et al. (2024) examined how teachers' social-emotional competencies influenced the strategies they used to facilitate social participation among learners with EBDs. Through an online survey, the authors generated data from a sample of 155 primary school teachers through a structure questionnaire. The questionnaire had validated instruments to measure teachers' mindfulness, rational competence, emotional self-efficacy, and strategies used to facilitate social interactions. From the results, teachers rated their mindfulness and rational competence as high, while their rating of emotional self-efficacy was moderate. Simple correlation analyses also revealed that teachers who scored highly in rational competence were better equipped to implement intervention strategies that promote social participation among learners with EBDs. Nevertheless, there were notable implementation gaps such that teachers, in their daily practice, rarely promoted social participation among these learners. These findings highlight the need for more region-specific research to understand how teachers in different parts of the world, such as Kenya, develop and utilise their competencies when working with learners with EBD.

In South Africa, Mokoena et al. (2023) investigates the relationship between teachers' social-emotional competencies and their ability to promote prosocial behaviour in learners with EBDs. Using descriptive design with a sample of 166 teachers drawn from different schools in the country, the authors established that teachers with strong social-emotional skills created a more supportive classroom environment, which was crucial for learners with emotional and behavioural challenges. However, the study does not focus on how teachers specifically foster social interaction

in these learners and the challenges they encounter in such classrooms. This gap in the literature suggests that further research is needed to explore these competencies in the context of Nairobi County, Kenya, and how teachers address social skill deficits in learners with EBD.

In Egypt, a study by El-Tamami (2021) investigated the development of social and emotional skills among both teachers and students. Their experimental study involved 402 teachers and 1,730 learners sampled from different parts across the country. The author found that teachers' emotional intelligence significantly impacted their ability to implement effective social skills training. The findings emphasise the critical role that teachers' social-emotional competencies play in teaching these skills to students. However, this study investigated emotional intelligence only, not other dimensions of teacher competency. Besides, it was based on the general learner population and did not focus on learners with EBDs. These gaps present an opportunity for the current study to explore how teacher competencies in enhancing social skills among learners with EBDs in the Kenyan context.

In Kenya, Wambui (2022) examined the relationship between teachers' social-emotional learning competencies and their interaction with students in the classroom. The study found that teachers who were well-trained in social-emotional learning demonstrated improved teacher-student relationships and were better able to address the needs of learners with social skill deficits. However, the study targeted the general learner and did not specifically examine the competencies of teachers in handling learners with EBD. The current study aims to fill this gap by focusing on teacher competencies in facilitating social skill development among learners with EBDs, particularly in the Embakasi sub-county.

A study Ochieng and Odera (2023) explored the promotion of social and emotional competencies in Kenyan primary schools, emphasizing the need for teacher training in social-emotional learning. The study found that teacher training was crucial in promoting these competencies, yet it did not delve into how specific competencies influenced the social skill development of learners with EBDs. Instead, it targeted the general learner population. This presents an opportunity for the current study to explore the specific competencies required to support learners with EBDs and the challenges teachers face in applying these strategies in the classroom. Although global and regional studies provide valuable insights into the role of teachers' competencies in facilitating social skills among learners with EBDs, there is a distinct lack of research that specifically examines the competencies required by teachers in Kenyan primary schools, particularly in the Embakasi Sub-County of Nairobi.

### **2.3 Intervention Strategies to Enhance Social Skills for Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders**

Appropriate social skills training may help learners with EBDs to develop social abilities that enhance their capacities to interact effectively with their social environment (Reyes et al., 2020; Runjić et al., 2015). Through social skills training, these individuals may acquire social skills that enable them to build healthy social relationships and deal with social problems. Educators may observe a few red flags that some of their students with EBD are facing challenges in social situations and may be concerned that this signals some deficits in social skills. In fact, it is estimated that over a half of individuals with a disability have social, emotional, or behavioural challenges, including specific difficulties with social skills (Mansour & Wiener, 2020).

A study by Parker et al. (2021) provides valuable insights into global approaches to social skills interventions for learners with EBDs. The study highlights the importance of individualised

behavioural interventions that cater to the unique needs of learners with EBDs. It found that strategies like role-playing, peer modelling, and social stories were among the most effective in helping students improve their social skills. However, Parker et al. did not examine how these strategies are adapted to fit diverse cultural and educational contexts. The gap in understanding how these global strategies can be effectively implemented in different regions, including Kenya, presents an opportunity for the current study to explore localised intervention strategies and their effectiveness in Embakasi sub-county, Nairobi County.

Similarly, Roberts et al. (2022) examined the role of teacher-led interventions in enhancing social skills among students with EBDs in various school settings. Their descriptive survey involved 205 teachers and over 2,000 learners from different schools across the country. By analysing trends in teacher strategies, the authors identified cognitive-behavioural approaches as highly effective, specifically in addressing the underlying emotional triggers that contribute to behavioural issues. They also noted that teachers who received training in such approaches were able to implement more effective interventions. However, the study did not investigate the specific challenges teachers face when implementing these strategies or the impact of teacher competencies in different geographical contexts. This gap suggests that further research is necessary to understand how teachers in Nairobi County, particularly in resource-constrained environments, adapt and apply these strategies effectively.

In Italy, Giorgio et al. (2023) conducted a study focusing on intervention strategies used by teachers to address social and emotional needs of students with EBDs in inclusive classrooms. The study found that multi-modal interventions, which combine individual therapy, classroom management techniques, and peer-assisted learning, had a positive impact on learners' social skills.

Nevertheless, the authors also noted a lack of teacher training in these multi-modal approaches, which limits their effectiveness. Although this study offers valuable insights into effective strategies, it did not explore the specific competencies teachers need to employ these strategies effectively, nor did it examine how such interventions can be tailored to the socio-cultural context of Kenya. This presents a clear gap that the current study aims to address by investigating the intervention strategies teachers use in Nairobi's primary schools and how these can be adapted to local contexts.

In Nigeria, Adesokan et al. (2022) assessed teachers' preparedness to handle learners with EBDs, particularly in terms of their knowledge, awareness, and management strategies. Focusing on primary schools in Kogi State, Nigeria, the authors sampled 142 teachers who completed a structured questionnaire. According to the results, teachers' preparedness in terms of their knowledge and awareness of learners with EBDs was, on average, high. Although the authors report of a significant association between knowledge/awareness and the management strategies used to handle such learners, they did not assess specific intervention strategies. In South Africa, Ndlovu et al. (2023) investigated the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies used by teachers to support learners with EBD in inclusive classrooms. The study found that strategies such as positive reinforcement, structured routines, and behaviour modification were particularly effective in improving students' social behaviour (Ndlovu et al., 2023). However, the study did not address teachers' social and emotional competencies regarding the use of these strategies. This gap highlights the need for the present study to examine not only the intervention strategies used, but also the role of teacher competencies in implementing these strategies to enhance social interactions among learners with EBD in Kenya.

In Uganda, McMullen and McMullen (2018) investigated the influence of a teacher-led life skill intervention on students' behaviours. The intervention involved a three-day training program for teachers that focused on helping them nurture life skills among students. Using a quasi-experiment, the compared the behavioural outcomes of students assigned to the intervention against those in a control group. An analysis of covariance model of baseline and post-intervention data showed that students intervention group had significantly fewer internalising problems and higher connectedness than those in the control. Their findings demonstrated that structured programs focusing on nurturing essential life skills may improve students' social behaviours. Still, the research was conducted in secondary not primary schools, which was the focus of the current study. Additionally, it did not establish the extent to which teachers used such interventions and whether such programmes existed in the sampled schools. This aspect was also addressed in the current study.

In Tanzania, Majani (2020) examined the strategies teachers employed to manage disruptive behaviours in the country's secondary schools. The descriptive study utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods. They generated data using questionnaires and interviews involving a total of 70 student-teachers. From the findings, teachers did very little to improve appropriate behaviours in classrooms. Instead, they relied mostly on punishments and other punitive measures to deal with disruptive behaviours. The overreliance on punitive measures limited their ability to use effective strategies, such as tolerance, relational support, and positive feedback. This study did not assess the specific competencies that teachers needed to implement the recommended practices successfully, a gap the current study seeks to address by exploring how teachers in Nairobi County apply such strategies in their classrooms. Besides, the sample included student-teachers, not teachers who had been in the practice, and focused on secondary, not primary schools.

In Kenya, Njiru (2023) conducted a study on the use of behaviour modification techniques in primary schools for learners with EBD. The study found that positive reinforcement, setting clear expectations, and providing consistent feedback were common strategies used by teachers. However, the study did not explore how these strategies were specifically linked to the social skill development of learners with EBD. This gap is addressed by the current study, which aimed to specifically focus on the strategies used by teachers to influence social skills in learners with EBD, and to assess their effectiveness in the context of Embakasi sub-county, Nairobi County. Kiprop (2024) also examined the use of peer tutoring as an intervention strategy for learners with EBD in Nairobi's primary schools. The study found that peer tutoring allowed for enhanced social interactions and peer relationships, as students with EBD were able to work in pairs and practice social skills in a supportive environment. However, the study did not assess the role of teacher training in effectively implementing peer tutoring strategies. This gap highlights the need for studies investigating specific competencies teachers need to effectively implement such peer-mediated strategies.

#### **2.4 Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Handling Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders**

Students with EBDs struggle in school, perhaps to a greater degree than any other group of students. Gunter et al. (2021) examined the challenges teachers face in managing learners with EBDs globally. The study identified a range of difficulties, including the lack of adequate training, limited resources, and the need for individualized support strategies to address social skill deficits. Teachers reported that despite their best efforts, they often struggled to meet the diverse needs of learners with EBD, particularly in managing disruptive behaviour and facilitating positive social interactions. The study emphasized the importance of professional development to equip teachers

with the necessary skills and resources to address these challenges effectively. However, the study did not specifically explore the cultural or socio-economic factors that might influence the effectiveness of these interventions, which is a gap that the current study aims to fill by focusing on the specific challenges faced by teachers in Nairobi County, a region with unique social and educational challenges.

Lindsey et al. (2022) conducted a global review of teacher challenges in managing classrooms with a high proportion of learners with EBDs. The study found that teachers often lack support from school administrators, which limits their ability to implement effective interventions. Additionally, teachers frequently cited the emotional toll of working with learners with EBDs, noting that dealing with challenging behaviours and social skill deficits was emotionally exhausting and impacted their well-being. These findings suggest that teacher well-being and institutional support are key factors influencing the success of interventions for learners with EBDs. The current study will build on this by investigating how teachers in Nairobi County navigate these challenges, particularly in terms of administrative support and the emotional demands of their roles.

In Nigeria, Adeyemi et al. (2021) focused on the challenges Nigerian teachers face when addressing the social skill deficits of learners with EBDs. The study found that teachers often lacked appropriate training in managing EBDs and were not equipped with the skills to help students develop social competencies. The challenges were compounded by large class sizes, insufficient classroom management strategies, and a lack of parental involvement. Additionally, teachers reported a lack of collaboration with special education professionals, which limited their ability to create comprehensive support plans for learners with EBDs. These findings highlight the

importance of teacher training and inter-professional collaboration, areas which this study will further explore in the Kenyan context, specifically examining how teachers in Embakasi sub-county face similar challenges and how these can be addressed.

In South Africa, Pretorius et al. (2023) explored the challenges faced by teachers in managing learners with EBD, particularly in fostering social skills. The study found that teachers struggled with a lack of sufficient resources and training, which hindered their ability to effectively address social skill deficits. The emotional toll of managing disruptive behaviours was also a significant challenge, as teachers reported feeling unsupported and overwhelmed. The study also highlighted the importance of teacher resilience and self-efficacy in overcoming these challenges. This study underscores the need for teacher support and professional development, which the current study aims to investigate further, particularly in terms of how teachers in Nairobi County manage the social skill deficits of learners with EBDs.

In Egypt, Shahin et al. (2022) examined the challenges faced by teachers in addressing social and emotional needs of learners with EBDs. The study found that teachers frequently encountered challenges related to classroom management, including the difficulty in addressing learners' disruptive behaviours while promoting positive social interactions. The study also pointed out the lack of proper teacher preparation and professional development, which contributed to the challenges in addressing social skill deficits. This study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by teachers in Egypt, which are likely to resonate with teachers in Nairobi County. However, it does not address the specific coping strategies that teachers might employ to overcome these challenges, a gap this study seeks to fill.

In Uganda, Nalubega (2022) focused on the challenges faced by Ugandan teachers in managing learners with EBDs, especially in fostering social skills. The study identified a lack of proper teacher training, inadequate classroom management strategies, and large class sizes as key challenges. Teachers also reported insufficient support from school administrators and a lack of collaboration with special education professionals. This study provides insights into the challenges faced by teachers in a neighbouring African context, which are likely similar to those in Kenya. The present study will build on these findings by specifically focusing on how these challenges play out in Nairobi County and examining strategies to address them.

In Kenya, Otieno (2023) explored the challenges teachers face in managing social skills deficits among learners with EBDs. The study found that teachers in Nairobi reported difficulties in addressing social skill deficits due to a lack of adequate training and support. Teachers also highlighted the challenges posed by large class sizes and the emotional toll of managing students with challenging behaviours. This study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by teachers in Nairobi, which will be further explored in the current study. The present research will focus specifically on Embakasi sub-county and seek to identify ways in which teachers can be better supported in managing social skill deficits.

Mwangi (2024) examined the specific challenges faced by teachers in Nairobi's primary schools when dealing with social skill deficits among learners with EBD. The study found that teachers often struggled with a lack of effective classroom management techniques and had limited resources to address the diverse needs of learners with EBDs. Additionally, teachers reported difficulties in engaging with parents and the wider community to support the social skill development of learners with EBDs. This study's findings highlight the need for more

comprehensive support systems for teachers, which is one of the key areas that the current study aims to address. The reviewed studies illustrate that teachers across various regions face significant challenges in addressing social skill deficits among learners with EBD. The current study aimed to build on these findings by focusing on the specific challenges faced by teachers in Embakasi sub-county, Nairobi County, and exploring how these challenges can be mitigated through targeted interventions and support.

## **2.5 Summary of the Review and Relevant Gaps**

Much of the literature on social skills of learners with EBDs comes from developed countries, with a few studies conducted in the African context. The general consensus in the literature is that these individuals often have significant deficits in their social skills, which have far-reaching consequences on their academic achievements and overall school experiences. Still, their experiences may vary with specific contexts. Locally, various studies have documented the experiences of learners with EBDs in Kenya. However, these studies have limited geographical scopes and their findings may not reflect accurately on the state of these learners in other parts of the country. Besides, the existing research in Kenya hardly investigate the social levels of learners with EBDs. To address these gaps, the current study investigated the social skill deficits of learners with EBDs, focusing on primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi City County, an area characterised by high frequencies of disruptive behaviours among students.

Using proper instruction strategies in classrooms to inform decision-making is a part of an excellent teacher's professional competency. From the above review, teachers from different parts of the world have significant challenges handling learners with EBDs, partly due to limited training. In Kenya, the extant research suggests that many teachers in the country are not

adequately prepared to meet the needs of learners with EBDs. However, there is limited research on the specific competencies teachers need to facilitate social skills among these learners. The current study, therefore, sought to determine teacher's competencies in facilitating social skills of learners with EBDs in Nairobi County, specifically, Embakasi Sub-County.

Experimental studies from across the world, especially in developed countries, have established the effectiveness of various interventions to improve social skills among learners with EBDs. However, successful implementation of these programmes is hampered by multiple challenges, including inadequate teacher training, difficulties identifying such learners, problems with curriculum adaptation, and inadequate resources. While existing studies provide valuable insights into the intervention strategies used globally and in various African contexts, there is a clear gap in research focusing on the specific intervention strategies used by teachers in Nairobi County, Kenya and the associated challenges, particularly in Embakasi sub-county. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the intervention strategies employed by teachers to influence social skills of learners with EBDs in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County. The study also assessed the challenges encountered by teachers in promoting social skills among these learners.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The descriptive survey design is suitable for generating detailed information about a phenomenon or research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The goal is to describe a situation as it exists, without any variable manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). In this study, the descriptive survey design was appropriate because the researcher intended to provide a detailed description of the social skills deficits among learners with EBDs in Embakasi Sub-County, teacher's competencies to facilitate social skills among this population, the interventions used by teachers, and associated challenges without manipulating any variable.

The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to generate and analyse data. Quantitative methods involved the use of questionnaires and analysing the collected data descriptively and inferentially. These techniques allowed the research to collect and analyse data from a sufficiently large sample, thereby improving the generalisability of the findings (Schoonenboom, 2023). Qualitative methods encompassed the use of interviews to generate in-depth views on the experiences of learners with EBDs in the sampled schools and the interventions used to improve social skills among them (El Hammoumi, 2024). By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the study sought to provide a holistic description of intervention used for learners with EBDs in primary schools in Nairobi City County (Schoonenboom, 2023).

#### **3.2 Research Variables**

The study investigated one dependent and three independent variables (Figure 1.1). The dependent variable was social skills among learners with EBDs. This variable was measured based on the

extent to which learners with EBDs in the selected schools exhibited a set of five selected social skills: empathy, self-control, assentation, cooperation, and responsibility. The independent variables were interventions strategies, teacher competencies and challenges. The potential moderating variables included existing school policies on disruptive behaviours, the design/content of the curriculum, and parental involvement. Each of these factors may modify the relationship between the independent variables and a learner's social skill.

### **3.3 Location of the Study**

This research was conducted in Embakasi Sub County in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Located in the south-east part of Nairobi, Embakasi Sub-County, is one of the 11 sub-counties in the city Eastlands. The sub-county hosts some of Nairobi's renown low-income neighbourhoods, characterised by high unemployment rates, poverty, and crime levels (Limisi et al., 2023; Wanjala et al., 2024). Within Embakasi, the study focused on Kayole Zone, which has one of the highest crime rates involving school-age children in Nairobi City County (Maina, 2021). Having been an upper primary teacher in the zone for over a decade and working as a community health volunteer with an organisation supporting vulnerable children in the area, the researcher encountered several high-profile behavioural cases in Kayole area, including some of her students being identified to be members of Nairobi's most notorious gangs. Many of these cases required interventions by criminal officers. The high number of high-profile behavioural problems in Kayole motivated the focus on this zone.

### **3.4 Target Population**

The study targeted administrators, teachers, and learners with EBDs in public, regular primary schools in Kayole Zone, Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi City County. Administrators, as used in

this study, included head teachers, their deputies and senior teachers. At the time of the survey, the zone had seven (7) public primary schools with 39 administrators, 239 teachers, and 10,571 learners based on internal school records, totalling to 10,849 individuals. There was no data on the total number of learners with EBDs in the seven schools.

School administrators were targeted because they are responsible for ensuring that there are effective strategies and interventions in place to promote social skills among learners in their schools (Gathumbi et al., 2015). On their part, teachers were targeted because they are the direct implementers of any school intervention targeting learners. Hence, it was expected that they would have first-hand experience and knowledge of such programmes in their schools.

Finally, learners were targeted to provide a sample to be used to identify social skill deficits. Although EBDs are evident in all primary school grades, due to time and other logistic considerations, the study could not cover all classes. Instead, it focused on class seven pupils. This class was targeted because from the behaviour inventories (black books) of the seven schools, it accounted for the highest proportion of documented behavioural cases in these institutions.

### **3.5 Sampling Procedures and Sample Sizes**

#### **3.5.1 Sampling procedures**

Sampling occurred in multiple phases, beginning with a selection of representative schools.

##### **3.5.1.1 Schools**

The schools included in the study were sampled purposively. Purposive sampling is ideal when a researcher targets some desired characteristics, leading to highly rich and relevant data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). In this study, the researcher purposively sampled schools in Kayole Zone that

had the highest number of cases involving behavioural problems, based on the institutions' behaviour inventories, commonly termed as 'the black book.' The assumption was that compared to their peers, these schools would have higher numbers of learners with EBDs due to the high frequencies of 'black book' cases (Dulas et al., 2025).

### **3.5.1.2 Administrators**

Once the schools had been selected, a census of all the administrators in these schools was conducted. A census was deemed appropriate because the target population was small and well-defined, such that collecting data from every member would provide a better picture of the interventions used for improving social skills among learners with EBDs in these schools (Sankar, 2011). Besides, the monetary cost and other logistical requirements involved in reaching each member of the population were manageable (Sankar, 2011).

### **3.5.1.3 Teachers**

Teachers were sampled through a stratified random procedure, with the selected schools serving as the strata. This method was used to ensure that all the sampled schools were represented fairly in the teacher sample (Glasgow, 2005). Once the schools had been selected, a sub-sample of teachers was obtained from each school using a simple random process to give all teachers an equal opportunity of being selected, leading to a fair sample (Glasgow, 2005).

### **3.5.1.4 Learners**

For learners, the study focused on class seven pupils. Selection for learners involved the use of purposive sampling methods and occurred in two stages in each school. Firstly, for each school, the class teachers were asked to identify learners exhibiting persistent behavioural problems. The two schools had multiple class seven streams, all of which were included. Secondly, for each

learner identified in the first phase, class teachers were to complete the teacher's version of Vanderbilt Assessment Scale (VAS-T) to establish whether they, in deed, had an EBD (Mark et al., 2003). All learners identified as having EBDs were purposively included.

### **3.5.2 Sample Sizes**

#### **3.5.2.1 Schools**

The study sampled two (2) schools, an equivalent of 30% of the schools in Kayole Zone (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). According to unpublished records available at the Sub-County Criminal Investigation Office at the time, the two schools had the highest number of criminal cases among the seven in Kayole Zone. A scrutiny of their 'black books' further revealed several high-profile behavioural cases, which were mostly reported among class seven pupils. Compared to other schools in the Sub- County, learners in the two schools had a very high rate of problematic behaviours, which occurred with increased frequency, consistency, intensity, and duration far beyond the expected level. The combination of these factors justified their selection.

#### **3.5.2.2 Administrators and Teachers**

The two schools, henceforth dubbed School A and School B, had a total of 12 administrators and 74 teachers. All the 12 administrators were included in the sample due to their small number. The study sampled 30% of the 74 teachers in the two schools (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013), making a sub-sample of 23 participants. They were distributed proportionately across the two schools such that the number of teachers from School A and School B were 11 and 12, respectively.

#### **3.5.2.3 Learners**

At the time of the survey, the two schools had a learner population of 3,132, out of which 363 were in class seven. Of the 363, teachers identified 58 as having persistent behavioural problems.

However, only 47 met the criteria for EBDs using the VAS-T (Mark et al., 2003; NICHQ, 2004). All the 47 were purposively sampled to be included in the study. In total, the study sampled 82 individuals. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of the participants across the

**Table 3.1: Sample Matrix**

<b>Category</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Percent of Population</b>
Administrators	A	6	6	100
	B	6	6	100
	Sub-total	12	12	100
Teachers	A	36	11	30.6
	B	38	12	31.6
	Sub-total	74	23	31.1
Learners with EBDs	A	19	19	100
	B	28	28	100
	Sub-total	47	47	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>133</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>61.7</b>

### **3.6 Research Instruments**

The tools used in this study included the VAS, questionnaire for teachers, and an interview guide for administrators. Their construction was as described in the following sub-sections.

#### **3.6.1 Vanderbilt Assessment scale**

The Vanderbilt Assessment Scale (Appendix I) is a widely used tool for screening for EBDs and other developmental problems in children and adolescents (Wolraich et al., 2003). Its selection was based on its high reliability, validity, and ease of administration in educational settings. Although VAS was originally developed for the use of U.S. children, its validity with populations in other countries has been established (Döpfner et al., 2006). The scale has versions for teachers,

parents, and children. In this study, the teacher's version (VAS-T) was used to identify learners with EBDs in the sampled schools. The version used in this study had 29 items for screening for inattention, hyperactivity, opposition defiance, and conduct disorder (NICHQ, 2004).

### **3.6.2 Questionnaires for Teachers**

The study used a structured questionnaire (Appendix II) to obtain data from teachers on learners' social skill deficits, teacher competencies in improving social skills among learners with EBDs, intervention strategies used, and the challenges they encountered. The questionnaire provided a practical means of collecting information from a large number of respondents within a short period.

The questionnaire was segmented into four sections. The first part (Section A) included five closed-ended questions to gather respondents' background details, including gender, age, professional qualifications, and teaching experience. Section B had the teacher's version of the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS-T) (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). The SSRS-T is a 30-item scale designed to measure learners' social skills among children and adolescents along five constructs: empathy, self-control, assertion, responsibility, and cooperation (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). For each learner, the teacher scored the items using a three-point scale from "never occurs" to "occurs very often". The scale has been shown to be highly valid and having high reliability scores for various learner populations (Diperna & Volpe, 2005; Eslami et al., 2014).

Section C comprised three sets of items to assess teachers' competencies and the intervention strategies used to promote social skills among learners with EBDs. The final part, Section D, prompted respondents to indicate the challenges they encountered when dealing with such learners. All the items in these sections were close-ended.

### **3.6.3 Interviews Guide for Administrators**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school administrators to collect in-depth information about the social skills of learners with EBDs and interventions used to improve them. The interview guide (Appendix III) consisted ten items that prompted respondents to comment on the state of intervention strategies for learners with EBDs in these schools.

## **3.7 Piloting**

A pilot study was conducted in a randomly selected public primary school in Kayole Zone. The pilot targeted one administrator and ten teachers (Saunders et al., 2019). The primary purpose of the pilot study was to assess the reliability and validity of the research tools, including the questionnaire and interview guide. Some respondents found certain questions unclear and confusing. After consultations with experts (the supervisors) the questions were rephrased to enhance clarity and ensure better understanding. The interview guide was initially lengthy, leading to respondent fatigue. The guide was revised by eliminating redundant questions and ensuring relevance to the study objectives. Some participants were hesitant to contribute during the discussions. The moderator incorporated icebreakers and established ground rules to foster a more inclusive and participatory environment.

### **3.7.1 Validity**

The validity of the research instruments was ensured through extensive consultations with experts, specifically the research supervisors, who provided feedback on the content, structure, and appropriateness of the instruments. This process ensured that the instruments adequately captured the necessary information for the study. Additionally, content validity was addressed by aligning the items in the questionnaires and interviews with the study objectives.

A pilot test conducted in a public primary school in Kayole Zone not included in the main study helped identify ambiguous items and refine the instruments for clarity and relevance. The study also employed triangulation by using multiple data collection methods, including questionnaires and interviews, to cross-verify information and enhance the validity of the findings. Furthermore, clear definitions of key terms were provided to ensure consistency in respondents' understanding and interpretation of the questions, thereby minimizing the risk of misinterpretation. These measures collectively ensured that the data collected accurately reflected the influence of teachers' intervention strategies on social interaction among learners with EBD in selected primary schools in Nairobi County.

### **3.7.2 Reliability**

To ensure that the instruments gave consistent results, the researcher administered the research instruments to the participants in the pilot school. The researcher used the test-retest technique in testing the reliability of instruments. An interval of 2 weeks was taken between test and re-test. A reliability coefficient was computed using spearman's coefficient of correlation formula. The researcher modified or refined the instruments based on the reliability coefficient obtained, ensuring consistency in results. A reliability coefficient of 0.83 was established and was deemed acceptable (Saunders et al., 2019). The modification process ensures the research tools measure what they intend to measure accurately. For the qualitative part of the study, modifications were made to enhance the trustworthiness of the instruments. Adjustments were made to ensure that the perspectives of the participants were accurately captured. After data collection, the researcher went back to the participants to verify that their responses were interpreted correctly (Saunders et al., 2019). This feedback helped ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings.

### 3.8 Data Collection Techniques

The researcher obtained a research permit from National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). A clearance from the Area Education Office serving Kayole Zone was sought and permission given to visit the schools under study for data collection. Permission was also obtained from the administrations of the two schools and individual participants.

The actual data collection began by the researcher identifying learners with EBDs in the sampled schools using a two-step procedure. The focus was on class seven learners for reasons indicated previously. Class teachers first identified learners with persistent behavioural problems, then completed the VAS-T for each identified learner with close guidance from the researcher. The researcher then personally gave out questionnaires to the sampled teachers. Clear instructions were given on how to fill them. For confidentiality, respondents were advised not to use their real names. The researcher waited to answer any question(s) the respondents had. In each school, the questionnaires were collected the same day they were administered to enhance return rate.

The researcher also conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with administrators in the two schools. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a quiet office setting to allow for privacy and candid responses. The responses were audio-recorded, with permission from the interviews, for later analysis.

### 3.9 Data Analysis

Table 3.2 shows the data analysis and presentation plan used to achieve the objectives.

**Table 3.2: Data Analysis and Presentation Plan**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Data Needed</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Analysis Technique</b>	<b>Presentation</b>
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1.	Social skill levels	Questionnaire	Quantitative (ordinal, scale)	Descriptive: frequencies, percentages, means, stand dev. Inferential: t-test, one-way ANOVA	Tables and graphs
		Interviews	Qualitative	Thematic analysis (themes/codes)	Narration
2.	Competence levels	Questionnaires	Quantitative (ordinal, scale)	Descriptive: frequencies, percentages, means, stand dev. Inferential: t-test, one-way ANOVA	Tables and graphs
		Interviews	Qualitative	Thematic analysis (themes/codes)	Narration
3.	Intervention strategies	Questionnaires	Quantitative (ordinal)	Descriptive: frequencies, percentages, means, stand dev.	Tables and graphs
		Interviews	Qualitative	Thematic analysis (themes/codes)	Narration
4.	Challenges	Questionnaires	Quantitative (ordinal)	Descriptive: frequencies, percentages, means, stand dev.	Tables and graphs
		Interviews	Qualitative	Thematic analysis (themes/codes)	Narration

Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative methods were used to analyse data from questionnaires and involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Raw data from the questionnaires were entered in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, IBM, v. 21), coded appropriately, and checked for inconsistencies and anomalies.

For the first two objectives, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to identify important trends in the social skill deficits among sampled learners and intervention strategies used by teachers. The independent samples t-test and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were then used to compare the skill and competence levels across selected participant categories. Tests of significance were performed at the 95% confidence level. For the last two objectives, frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to describe the

interventions for learners with EBDs and challenges encountered by teachers. Quantitative results were presented using tables and graphs.

Data from interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Audio recording were first transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data was then scrutinised manually for to identify relevant codes, which were then used to generate key themes regarding social skill deficits, teacher competencies, intervention strategies, and challenges involved in the promotion of social skills among learners with EBDs. Qualitative findings were presented through narration.

### **3.10 Logistical and Ethical Considerations**

#### **3.10.1 Logistical Considerations**

A letter of Introduction was applied by the researcher from the Graduate School of Kenyatta University and obtains a research permit from the NACOSTI through Kenyatta University graduate school, which is a mandatory requirement when carrying out research in Kenya. The researcher sought authority from sub-county Education Office to facilitate data collection. Finally, permission was sought from the management of the two schools and individual participants.

#### **3.10.2 Ethical Consideration**

The participants signed an informed consent form. They were informed in the form that they were participating voluntarily, and they could withdraw any time during the research, that data collected were used for purposes of research only, the data were kept under lock and key and confidentiality was maintained. Code names were used, the digital data was stored in a computer where only the researcher had access to and finally, all data not used after the research were destroyed. The researcher avoided any unethical aspect such as plagiarism to remain focused and obtain an empirical solution to the research problem.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The study aimed to investigate the influence of teacher's intervention strategies on social interaction among learners with EBD in selected primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi County. The analysis of the results was based on the following objectives:

1. Identify the social skills deficit of learners with EBDs,
2. Determine teacher's competencies in facilitating social skills of learners with EBDs,
3. Establish intervention strategies teachers use to influence social skills of learners with EBDs, and
4. Find out the challenges encountered by teachers in promoting social skills among learners with EBDs in Embakasi Sub-County.

This chapter presents and discusses the findings. The chapter has five sections, beginning with a presentation of general and demographic information. The subsequent four sections present and discuss the results as per the study objectives. The findings highlight the need for policies and strategies to ensure effective interventions targeting learners with EBDs in these schools.

#### **4.2 General and Demographic Information**

##### **4.2.1 General Information**

Data collection involved the use of questionnaires to teachers and semi-structured interviews to administrators in two public primary schools (School A and School B) in Kayole Zone, Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi. Overall, the exercise was a success with only minor difficulties encountered. In total, the researcher administered 23 questionnaires and one-on-one interviews with eight

administrators from the two schools. Data was also obtained for 47 class seven learners identified as having EBDs.

Questionnaires were administered to a total sample of 23 teachers. At the end of the survey, 16 had completed and returned the questionnaires, translating into a response rate of 69.6%. According to Holtom et al. (2022), as of 2020, the average questionnaire response rate, based on their analysis of over 700 studies published in high-profile journals, was about 68%. Hence, the value reported in the present study is consistent with global trends (Holtom et al., 2022). Although the study had intended to interview all the 12 administrators in School A and School B, only 8 (66.7%) were available. The other four were unavailable due to work-related or personal reasons.

Class teachers also completed the SSRS-T tool for all the 47 class seven learners sampled, translating into a response rate of 100%. These learners had been pre-identified by teachers as having persistent behavioural problems. The final sample, thus, comprised 16 teachers, eight administrators, and 47 learners, making up 86.6% of the original sample.

#### **4.2.2 Demographic Characteristics**

The analysis was based on data collected for 24 respondents, comprising 16 teachers, 8 administrators, and 47 learners from two schools. This section presents and discusses the demographic characteristics of each participant category.

##### **4.2.2.1 Teachers**

Data was collected on the teachers' gender, age, professional qualification, and work experience. The distribution with reference to these characteristics are presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: The Distribution of Teachers by their Demographic Characteristics**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gender	Female	10	62.50
	Male	6	37.50
Age	20-29 years	3	18.75
	30-39 years	6	37.50
	40-49 years	5	31.25
	50 years and above	2	12.50
Professional qualification	Certificate	3	18.75
	Diploma	9	56.25
	Undergraduate	2	12.50
	Post-graduate	2	12.50
Teaching experience	1-5 years	5	31.25
	6-10 years	6	37.50
	11-15 years	3	18.75
	Above 15 years	2	12.50

The results indicate that a slight majority (62.5%,  $n = 10$ ) of the teachers were females, while the other 37.5% ( $n = 6$ ) were males. This finding implies that there were more female than male teachers in the sampled public primary schools in Kayole Zone. The higher presence of female than male teachers in these schools may suggest a gendered tendency in primary school teaching.

There are suggestions that a teacher's gender may influence the way they interact with learners with EBDs (Abaoud & Almalki, 2015; Alhossein, 2016). However, the evidence on the relationship between the two variables is mixed. For example, Abaoud and Almalki (2015) found that in a sample of general education teachers in Saudi Arabia, males had a better understanding of the characteristics of learners with EBDs than their female peers. In contrast, in another survey conducted in the same country, Alhossein (2016) reported that compared to their male counterparts, female teachers had a higher knowledge of EBDs and learners with these conditions. On their part, Hanson (2020) found no evidence of a significant influence of a teacher's gender on

the quality of education provided to learners with EBDs. It was beyond the scope of this study to verify or refute these claims. Still, with evidence suggesting a rising trend in the number of learners diagnosed with EBDs in different places across the world (Inbar-Furst & Landau, 2022), all teachers, irrespective of their gender or other characteristics, need to be adequately prepared to provide quality education to this population. As Hanson (2020) concludes, what matters most is not a teacher's gender but their ability to maintain positive relationships with these learners.

A slight majority of teachers (68.8%,  $n = 11$ ) were in the age bracket of 30-49 years (Table 4.1). These findings suggest that in these schools, the largest proportion of teachers were in the middle-aged bracket (30-49 years). Only 37.5% ( $n = 3$ ) and 25.0% ( $n = 2$ ) were below 30 years and above 49 years, respectively. Similar to gender, there is no consensus on the relationship between a teacher's age and their interactions with learners with EBDs, which may be complex depending on a range of factors. On the one hand, older teachers may have the experience and patience needed to handle these learners, maintaining their composure even in challenging situations (Ismail et al., 2018). On the other hand, younger teachers may bring fresh perspectives and may be open to experiment with new methodologies intervention strategies for effective social skills development among learners with EBDs (Ismail et al., 2018). The age distribution of teachers in this sample suggests a relatively youthful workforce, considering that only a quarter was aged above 50 years. Future research could look into the interplay between this age structure and the provision of quality education to learners with EBSs in these schools.

Regarding the level of education, the majority (81.2%,  $n = 13$ ) had at least a diploma in an education field, with 12.5% ( $n = 2$ ) having a post-graduate degree (Table 4.1). Only 18.8% ( $n = 3$ ) had a certificate. Table 4.1 also reveals that a slight majority (68.8%,  $n = 11$ ) of the teachers in

the sample had taught for over five years, with 12.5% ( $n = 2$ ) having been in the services for over 15 years (Table 4.1). Overall, the majority of teachers in this sample had a high professional qualification and experience based on their educational attainment and length in the teaching service. Some findings suggest that these two variables – educational attainment and experience – are a significant predictor of a teacher’s ability to provide quality education and assistance to learners with EBDs (Alkahtani, 2022; Ismail et al., 2018). The relatively high professional qualification and experience are, thus, crucial for the implementation of intervention strategies for learners with EBDs, ensuring they are both practical and effective in meeting the social skill development needs of the learners (Alkahtani, 2022; Ismail et al., 2018). Still, the relatively small number (12.5%) of teachers with advanced degrees or specialized qualifications in dealing with EBD learners might point to a need for further training in specialized areas.

#### 4.2.2.2 Administrators

Similar to teachers, data was collected on the administrators’ gender, age, professional qualification and experienced based on their duration in their current position. Their distributions by these characteristics were as shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: The Distribution of Administrators by their Demographic Characteristics**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gender	Female	3	37.50
	Male	5	62.50
Age	40-49 years	4	50.00
	50 years and above	4	50.00
Professional qualification	Certificate	3	37.50
	Diploma	3	37.50
	Undergraduate	2	25.00
Duration in current position	11-15 years	3	37.50
	16-20 years	4	50.00
	21 years and above	1	12.50

A slight majority (62.5%,  $n = 5$ ) of the administrators were males, while the other 37.5% ( $n = 3$ ) were females. Thus, while there were more female than male teachers in the sampled schools, leadership positions were mostly held by males, suggesting a much higher representation of men than women in the leadership of these institutions. The extant literature generally points to no significant influence of gender on administrative abilities (Shen & Joseph, 2020). Still, given that gender may influence managerial styles, diverse administrative teams with females and males could result in broad perspectives and improved leadership quality (Kruger, 2008). The male-dominated leadership evident in this study could, therefore, be denying these schools the opportunities to exploit the unique capabilities of female administrators to potentially influence the effectiveness of intervention strategies for learners with EBDs.

The results in Table 4.2 indicate that the administrators were evenly distributed between the age categories of 40-49 years and 50 years and above, with each group accounting for 50%. The even distribution in the age of administrators implies a balance of experience and potential openness to innovative approaches (Shen & Joseph, 2020). Administrators with significant experience may offer valuable insights into managing learners with EBD, while those in the older age bracket may provide a stabilizing influence in decision-making (Ismail et al., 2018).

Regarding the level of training, over a third (37.5%,  $n = 3$ ) of the administrators had attained a certificate in education administration, while an equal proportion (37.5%,  $n = 3$ ) had a diploma in education administration (Table 4.2). Those with a bachelor's (undergraduate) degree in education or administration-related courses comprised 25.0% ( $n = 2$ ) of the total sampled school administrators. The training levels of the sample suggests that while a substantial proportion of administrators in these schools holds foundational qualifications, there is room for enhancing the

specialization in education administration. Higher-level courses in EBD management could improve the ability of the administrators to facilitate the establishment of effectiveness of school policies and intervention strategies for learners with EBDs (Ismail et al., 2018).

Finally, Table 4.2 shows that the administrators were highly experienced. All of them had been in their current position for over 10 years, with 62.5% ( $n = 5$ ) having for at least 16 years. The experience in their positions suggests that administrators were more likely to be knowledgeable about school management and the challenges faced by learners with EBDs, having interacted with such learners for a long a time (Alkahtani, 2022). It was beyond the scope of the study to assess whether the high experience actually translated into improved practices toward intervention strategies for learners with EBDs in their schools.

#### **4.2.2.3 Learners**

A two-step procedure was used to identify learners with EBDs. First, class teachers were first asked to identify learners in their class that exhibited persistent emotional and behavioural issues. Next, for each learner identified, they were to complete the VAS-T to verify whether they actually had an EBD based on the criteria suggested in the literature (NICHQ, 2004; Wolraich et al., 2003). Although teachers initially isolated 58 learners as demonstrating persistent emotional/ and behavioural problem, 47 were actually identified as having an EBD using the VAS-T. This number translated to 12.9% of the total number of learners in the sampled classes.

The average global prevalence of EBDs among school-age children and adolescents is estimated to be between 15 and 20%, although values as high as over 50% have been reported in some populations (Chougule et al., 2024; Lavigne et al., 1993; World Health Organisation, 2024). In Kenya, published prevalence rates vary considerably, with values ranging from below 15% to

nearly 30% (Kariuki et al., 2017; Magai et al., 2018). The value obtained in this study is lower than those reported by most studies (Baariu et al., 2022; Kariuki et al., 2017; Magai et al., 2018). A possible explanation is that class teachers may have under-identified learners with these conditions. Whatever the reasons, these results highlight the need for additional studies to provide a more consolidated data on the prevalence of EBDs in the country's public primary schools.

The only demographic information collected for learners was their gender and age. Their distribution across their gender and age categories were as shown in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: The Distribution of Learners by their Gender and Age**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gender	Female	19	39.58
	Male	28	58.33
Age	11-12 years	19	40.43
	13-15 years	21	59.57
	Above 15 years	7	14.89

A slight majority (58.3%,  $n = 28$ ) of the learners in the sample consisted of males, while the corresponding proportion for girls was 39.6% ( $n = 19$ ). There are suggestions that a learners' gender may influence their risk of having EBDs (Sheaffer et al., 2021). However, the evidence is mixed with some indicating a higher prevalence among males than females, while other findings indicate otherwise (Novak et al., 2020; Sheaffer et al., 2021). These differences may partly be attributed to the specific EBDs assessed. Generally, female children and youths tend to be more prone to internalising problems than their male peers, while the reverse tends to be true for externalising problems (Gutman & McMaster, 2020; Novak et al., 2020). This study did not focus on the occurrence of specific EBD categories. Still, these findings indicate that gender could be an

influential factor in the risk of EBDs among learners in public primary schools in Kayole Zone and other parts of the country.

Age-wise, the majority (81.5%,  $n = 40$ ) were 15 years and below, with 59.6% ( $n = 21$ ) aged between 13 and 15 years. This distribution seems to correspond with the typical age structure of class seven pupils in primary schools in Kenya. Still, age has been shown to be an important predictor of EBDs among school-age children and adolescents, often interacting with gender (Wesselhoeft et al., 2015).

### **4.3 Social Skills Deficit of Learners with Emotional and Behaviour Disorders**

The first objective of this study sought to identify the social skills deficit of learners with EBDs in Embakasi Sub-County. Data on this objective came from teachers and administrators.

#### **4.3.1 Teachers' Perspectives on Learners' Social Skills**

To accomplish this objective, the researcher, with the help of class teachers from two randomly selected primary schools in Kayole Zone, first identified a sample of class seven learners with EBDs. A total of 47 learners were identified. Class teachers were then asked to complete the SSRS-T questionnaire for each of the 47 learners identified as having an EBD. For each item, the teacher was to rate the extent to which a learner manifested the behaviour using a three-point scale ranging from "never" to "very often." Their responses were then coded as follows: 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, and 2 = very often. Therefore, the minimum and maximum scores a learner could attain in each item were 0 and 2, respectively. Selected summary statistics for learners' scores in each of the 30 items are shown in Table 4.4. The table shows the minimum (Min) and maximum (Max) values, mean scores (M), and the corresponding standard deviations (SD).

**Table 4.4: Summary Statistics for Learners' Scores on the SSRS-T Items**

<b>How often does this child ...</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Produces correct schoolwork?	0	1	0.32	0.471
Keeps his or her work area clean without being reminded?	0	2	0.49	0.621
Responds appropriately to physical aggression from peers?	0	1	0.26	0.441
Initiates conversations with peers?	0	2	0.49	0.585
Volunteers to help peers on classroom tasks?	0	2	0.55	0.653
Politely refuses unreasonable requests from others?	0	2	0.47	0.546
Appropriately question rules that may be unfair?	0	1	0.47	0.504
Responds appropriately to teasing by peers?	0	1	0.45	0.503
Accept peers' ideas for group activities?	0	2	0.47	0.546
Appropriately express feelings when wronged?	0	1	0.38	0.491
Receive criticism well?	0	1	0.36	0.486
Attend to your instructions?	0	2	0.49	0.585
Use time appropriately while waiting for your help?	0	1	0.40	0.496
Introduce himself /herself to new people without being told?	0	2	0.70	0.689
Compromise in conflict situations by changing own ideas to reach agreement?	0	1	0.36	0.486
Acknowledge compliments or praise from peers?	0	1	0.19	0.398
Easily make transition from one activity to another?	0	1	0.43	0.500
Control temper in conflict situations with peers?	0	1	0.19	0.398
Finish class assignments within time limits?	0	1	0.43	0.500
Listen to classmates when they present their work or ideas?	0	1	0.36	0.486
Confident in social interactions with opposite-sex peers?	0	2	0.55	0.583
Invite others to join in activities?	0	2	0.53	0.654
Control temper in conflict situations with adults?	0	1	0.34	0.479
Ignore peer distraction when doing classwork?	0	2	0.40	0.538
Stand up for peers when he/she have been unfairly criticised?	0	2	0.64	0.640
Put work materials or school property away?	0	1	0.36	0.486
Appropriately tell you when thinks they are treated unfairly?	0	1	0.51	0.505
Give compliments to members of the opposite sex?	0	2	0.53	0.620
Comply with your directions?	0	1	0.23	0.428
Respond appropriately to peer pressure?	0	1	0.28	0.452

From Table 4.4, the mean scores ranged from 0.19 ( $SD = 0.398$ ) for acknowledging praise or complements from peers and complying with teachers' directions' to 0.70 ( $SD = 0.689$ ) for 'introducing oneself to new people'. These values corresponded with 9.6% and 35.1%, respectively, of the maximum possible score. The framing of the SSRS items are such that a high score indicates a high performance in a particular social skill (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). These figures indicate that, on average, the sampled learners performed poorly (less than 50%) in all the 30 items assessed, suggesting that they were low in social skills.

Individually, only 12.8% ( $n = 6$ ) of the learners attained maximum possible scores in introducing oneself to new people, indicating that they very often demonstrated this skill. About 8.5% ( $n = 4$ ) attained maximum possible scores in inviting others to join their activities, volunteering to help peers with classwork, and standing up for peers when unfairly criticised. Additionally, only 6.4% ( $n = 3$ ) had a maximum score in keeping their work area clean without being reminded, while the corresponding proportion for attending to teachers' instructions, initiating conversations with peers, and appearing confident when interacting with peers of opposite sex was 4.3% ( $n = 2$ ) in each case. Only one learner (2.1%) attained a maximum possible score in ignoring peer distractions when doing classwork, politely refusing unreasonable requests, and accepting others' ideas when doing group works. No learner attained the maximum possible score in the other items.

For further insights into the learners' social skills, for each participant, composite SSRS-T scores were obtained as the sum of their scores in the individual items. The minimum and maximum SSRS-T score a learner could attain were 0 (0%) and 60 (100%), respectively. Selected summary statistics for their scores are shown in Table 4.5.

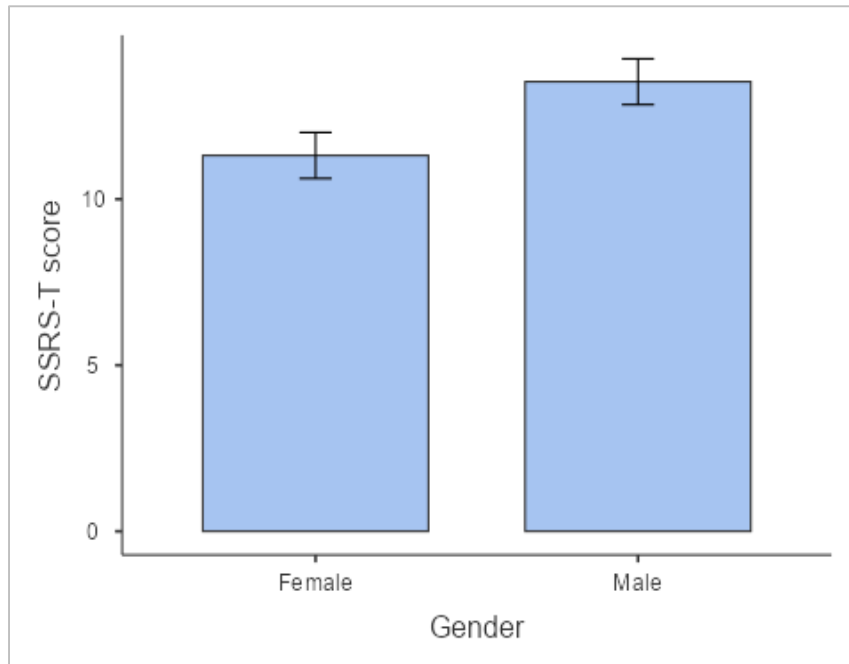
**Table 4.5: Summary Statistics for Composite SSRS-T Scores**

Statistic	Value
N	47
Minimum	6
Maximum	23
Mean	12.64
Median	12.0
Std. Dev	3.547
Skewness	0.507
Kurtosis	0.276

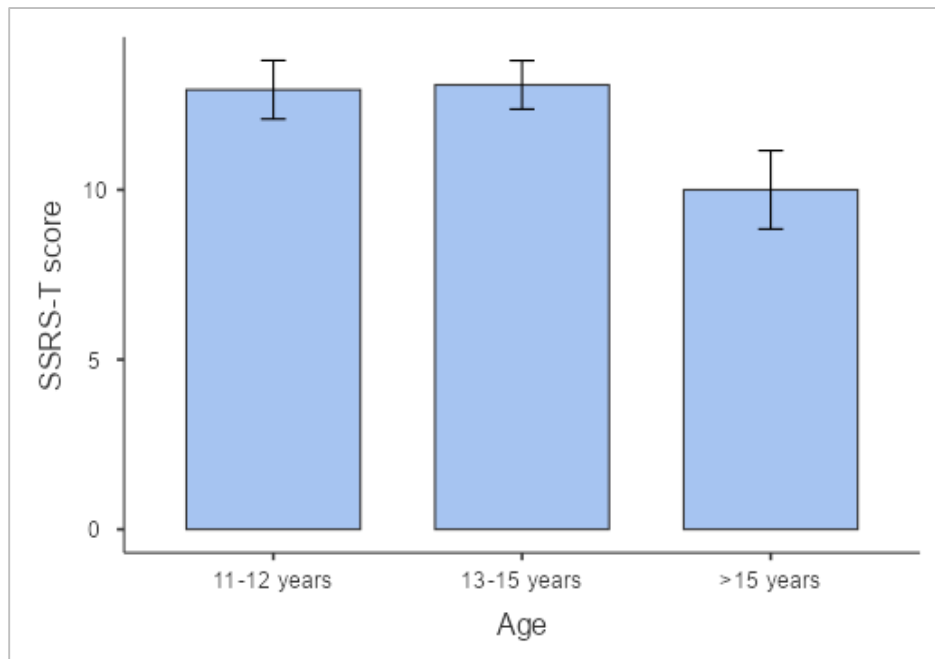
The mean SSRS-T score for this sample was 12.64 ( $SD = 3.54$ ). This was an equivalent of 21.1% of the maximum possible score and was considered low (below 50%). Thus, on average, the learners in this sample had low social skills. Individually, the scores ranged from 6 (10.0%) to 23 (38.3%). In other words, none of the learners attained a satisfactory score (at least 50%) in the social skills rating scale. Put differently, from teachers' perspectives, all learners with EBDs in these schools had high social skill deficits. These above results were as expected and support other findings indicating that learners in EBDs tend to demonstrate significant social skill deficits (Casey, 2012; Kimber et al., 2008; Novak et al., 2019). The low scores, in turn, emphasise the need for effective strategies to improve social skills among this population (Casey, 2012; Kimber et al., 2008). To this end, the current study also assessed the existing intervention strategies for facilitating social skills among learners with EBDs in the sampled schools and the results are presented in later section.

For additional analyses, the scores were compared across participants' gender and age categories. Past research suggests that these two variables may influence the extent to which learners with

EBDs demonstrate social skills. Mean plots for the scores across gender and age categories are in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2. In each case, standard error bars are added to enhance visualisation.



**Figure 4.1: Mean SSRS-T Scores by Gender**



**Figure 4.2: Mean SSRS-T Scores by Age Group**

From Figure 4.1, teachers rated male learners with EBDs as having, on average, higher social skills ( $M = 13.5, SD = 3.65$ ) than their female peers ( $M = 11.3, SD = 3.02$ ). These averages corresponded with 22.5% and 18.8%, respectively, of the maximum possible scores. The error bars in Figure 4.1 do not overlap, suggesting that the difference in the ratings due to gender was significant. An independent samples t-test (Table 4.6) confirm that the difference was significant ( $t = -2.19, p = 0.034$ ). Thus, for this sample, social skill deficits were significantly more pronounced for female learners with EBDs than for their male peers.

**Table 4.6: Inferential Tests for Mean Comparisons of Composite SSRS-T Scores by Gender and Age Categories**

	Test Statistic (t/F) **	Df	P
Gender	-2.19	45	0.034
Age	2.70	2, 44	0.098

\* Gender comparisons based on independent samples t-test, age comparisons based on one-way ANOVA  
 + Homogeneity and normality assumptions assumed based on Levene's and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, respectively ( $p > 0.05$ )

Figure 4.2 shows that learners aged 11-12 years ( $M = 12.9, SD = 3.76$ ) and 13-15 years ( $M = 13.1, SD = 3.35$ ) had, on average, same social skill levels. However, the mean SSRS-T score for learners aged above 15 years ( $M = 10.0, SD = 2.83$ ) was marginally lower than those of the other two categories. The error bars suggest the mean score the above-15-years category was significantly lower than those of lower age groups. However, one-way ANOVA (Table 4.6) revealed that the difference was non-significant at the 95% confidence level ( $F = 2.70, p = 0.098$ ). Pairwise comparisons using Turkey's HSD test indicated no significant difference between any two age categories ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence, for this sample, age seemed not to influence learners' social skill levels among learners with EBDs.

Past research has demonstrated that gender may be a significant predictor of social skill levels among learners with EBDs (Novak et al., 2019). However, the available evidence points to mixed conclusions. While some studies indicate that female learners with EBDs have higher social skills than their male colleagues (Novak et al., 2019), others suggest that males actually perform better than females (Sheaffe et al., 2020). These discrepancies may be attributed to multiple factors, such as differences in rater perceptions (Sheaffe et al., 2020). In the present study, social skill deficits were more pronounced among female learners with EBDs than among their female, while age seemed not to be a significant influencer. These findings imply that development of social skills among learners with EBDs may be determined by various personal characteristics, specifically gender, which should be considered when developing interventions targeting this population.

Despite their usefulness, there is a need for further research into this area to verify the above findings, considering that the study included only two primary schools, had a relatively small sample, and was based mostly on teachers' opinions. The last factor is particularly of interest, considering that much of the present work in this area mostly uses teacher-rated scales to assess social skills. Indeed, some studies using direct observation without relying on teacher-rated scales have found no significant difference in social skill levels due to gender (Sheaffe et al., 2020).

#### **4.3.2 Views from Administrators on Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders**

During an interviews, administrators were asked to categorize the population distribution of learners with EBD in their school with respect to gender. A participant from School B said that,

*Many children with EBD in this school will show internalizing behaviours and operate on the edge of social groups. Some, nonetheless may also show externalizing behaviours and appear disruptive in classroom and other social settings. We must therefore devise a procedure for interventions that also fit the individual profiles.*

Another participant from School A remarked,

*Some pupils fail to follow through when given directions and fails to finish tasks and activities. At the same time, they actively defy or refuse to go along with adult request or rules. However, if you try to confront them on the cause, some will even fail to attend to school for some days with any justified permission.*

Finally, another participant from School A explained,

*We have noted some pupils with unbecoming behaviour of fighting others, bullying, threatening and even intimidating their fellow pupils. This has created fear among the victims who also tend to feel lonely, unwanted, or unloved. However, we have rejuvenated our counselling programme to prioritize such matters. Children need to have the capacity to remain open minded and to pay attention to directions.*

Interviewees were also asked to comment on the transition rates from one grade level to the other of learners formally identified as having emotional and behaviour disorders in their school. A participant from school A said,

*I can't say there is a hundred percent transition in the last few years I have been the head of this institutions. We have records of certain number of pupils who dropped for certain reasons, some are known as drug abuse and criminal gang influence while other reasons are uncertain*

Another participant from school B remarked,

*Two of our learners who were recently identified about a year ago to involve in serious crimes of stealing, possession of weapons and smoking were suspended. However, they did not report and we have tried to reach their guardians but in vain. So it is uncertain whether they continued in other schools or not.*

Finally, another participant from school A explained,

*We have experienced difficult situations in this school recently. The major one touches the issue of discipline following the abandonment of corporal punishment. Many have actively*

*defy the school rules by publicly arguing with adults including teachers. The rate of stealing of pupil's belongings is also alarming.*

From the above sentiments, administrators from the two schools noted that learners with EBD tend to exhibit both internalizing and externalizing behaviours. They reported difficulties such as defiance, bullying, and arguing with adults. This suggests that teacher competencies in managing both internalizing and externalizing behaviours are crucial in promoting positive social interaction. The findings, thus, point to the need for professional development programs to enhance teachers' ability to manage diverse EBD manifestations, which will likely improve social interactions among learners. According to Rossi et al. (2023), teachers with specialized training in social skills interventions showed better outcomes with learners with EBD. This highlights the importance of professional development, which is also a key focus of this study. The reference to internalizing behaviours, like self-blame, and externalizing behaviours, such as bullying, aligns with Weiss et al. (2021), who found that learners with EBD often exhibit both types of behaviours, which can negatively impact their peer relationships and social skills.

There were reports of some learners engaging in severe behaviours, such as fighting, bullying, and even theft, with instances of suspension due to these behaviours. This highlights the importance of implementing early intervention strategies to prevent the escalation of disruptive behaviours. Schools may need to adopt more preventive approaches, such as establishing behavioural expectations and providing targeted interventions for students who exhibit these behaviours. On this note, Smith and Johnson (2021) emphasized the significance of structured social skills programs, which could help mitigate these more disruptive behaviours if implemented effectively. Teachers should, in turn, have the competencies needed to design and implement such

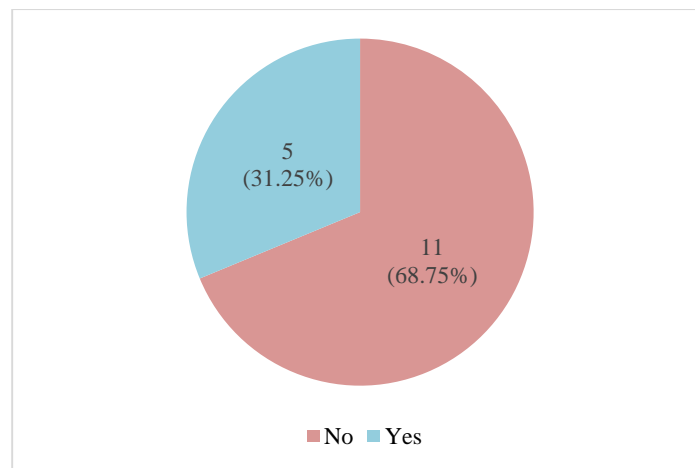
programmes. The next section reports on the findings on teachers' competencies in handling learners with EBDs in their schools.

#### 4.4 Teacher's Competencies in Facilitating Social Skills of Learners with EBD

The second objective of this study was to determine teacher's competencies in facilitating social skills of learners with EBDs in Embakasi Sub-County. Data on this objective also came from teachers and administrators.

##### 4.4.1 Teachers' Perspectives on their Competence

The questionnaire for teachers had two questions to assess their competencies. The first one asked them whether they had had a formal training in handling learners with EBDs. Their responses were as shown in Figure 4.3. The figure shows both raw frequencies and corresponding percentages.

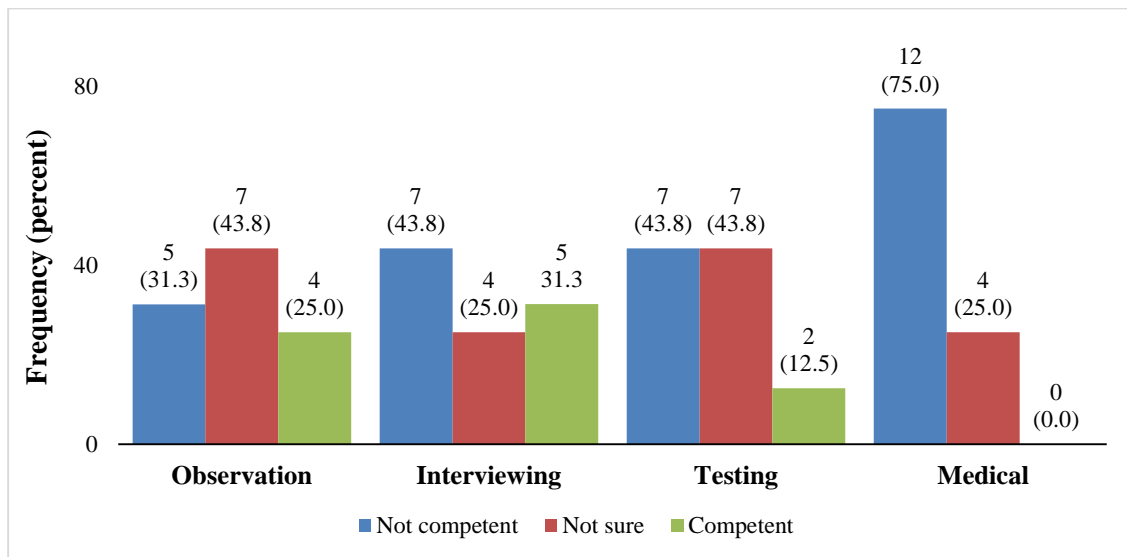


**Figure 4.3: Teacher's Distribution by Training on EBDs**

The largest proportion (68.8%,  $n = 11$ ) had not received a formal training in EBD management. Only less than a third had had a training on the same. Teacher training is a key factor in EBD management because it equips them with essential knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to identify learners with these conditions and create a positive classroom environment to control

disruptive behaviours (Boelens et al., 2018). Such training is also vital for nurturing vital social skills among this population (Boelens et al., 2018). The above findings, thus, bring to question the extent to which teachers in public primary schools in Kayole Zone are prepared to facilitate social skills among learners with EBDs in their classrooms. Further evidence from other studies suggest that these teachers are not an exception. For example, Mucherah et al. (2024) found that the majority of teachers in primary schools in western Kenya were not prepared to support inclusive education for learners with special needs. Although this study did not focus on EBDs, its findings support the view that many teachers in the country do not have the skills and knowledge needed to provide quality education to this population.

The second question prompted them to rate their perceived competence in using various methods for identifying learners with EBDs. Four techniques were assessed, namely, observations, interviewing, testing, and medical evaluation. For each technique, participants were to give their responses using a three-point Likert scale ranging from “not competent” to competent. Their responses were as presented in Figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4: Perceived Competence in Identifying Learners with EBDs**

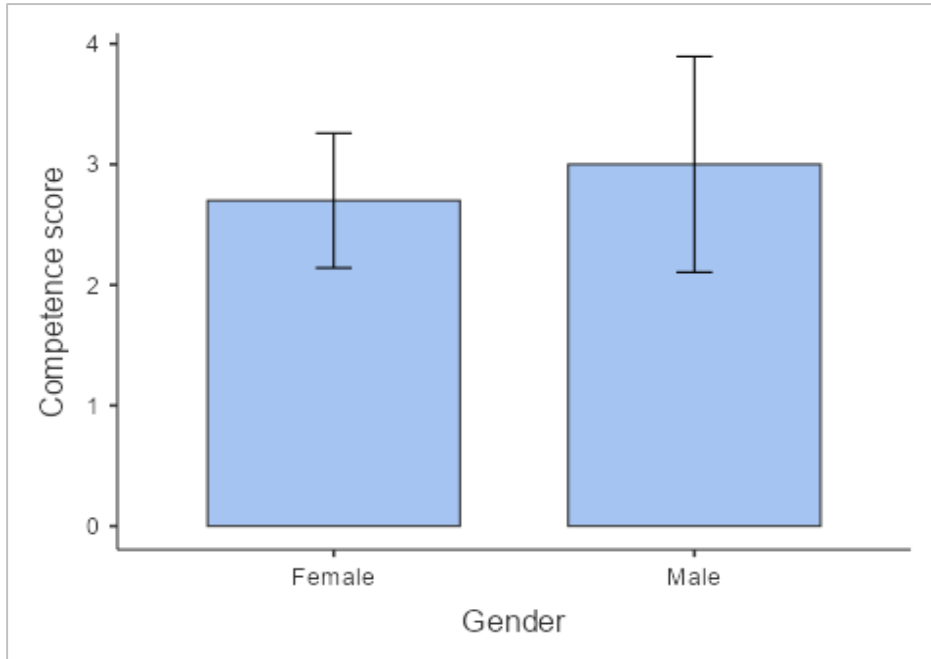
Less than a third of the sample (31.3%,  $n = 5$ ) stated that they were competent in interviewing, while 25.0% ( $n = 4$ ) felt competent in observations. Only 12.5% ( $n = 2$ ) was competent in testing and none in medical evaluation. On the other end, all participants were either not competent (75.0%,  $n = 12$ ) or not sure (25.0%,  $n = 4$ ). About 43.8% ( $n = 7$ ) was not competent in interviewing or testing, while the corresponding proportion for observation was 31.3% ( $n = 5$ ). Finally, 43.8% ( $n = 7$ ) were not sure whether they were competent in observation or testing, while the corresponding proportion for interviewing was 25.0% ( $n = 4$ ).

The results in Figure 4.4 indicate that teachers were mostly conversant with interviews and observations. Still, even with these two techniques, the proportions of teachers who felt competent were low (less than a third of the sample). These findings imply that most of the teachers were not competent in the methods for identifying learners with EBDs. Effective identification allows teachers to appreciate specific needs of learners with EBDs, design and implement appropriate interventions, and provide the needed support (Merikangas et al., 202). Effective identification, however, requires teachers to be competent in using various assessment methods (Elam, 2016).

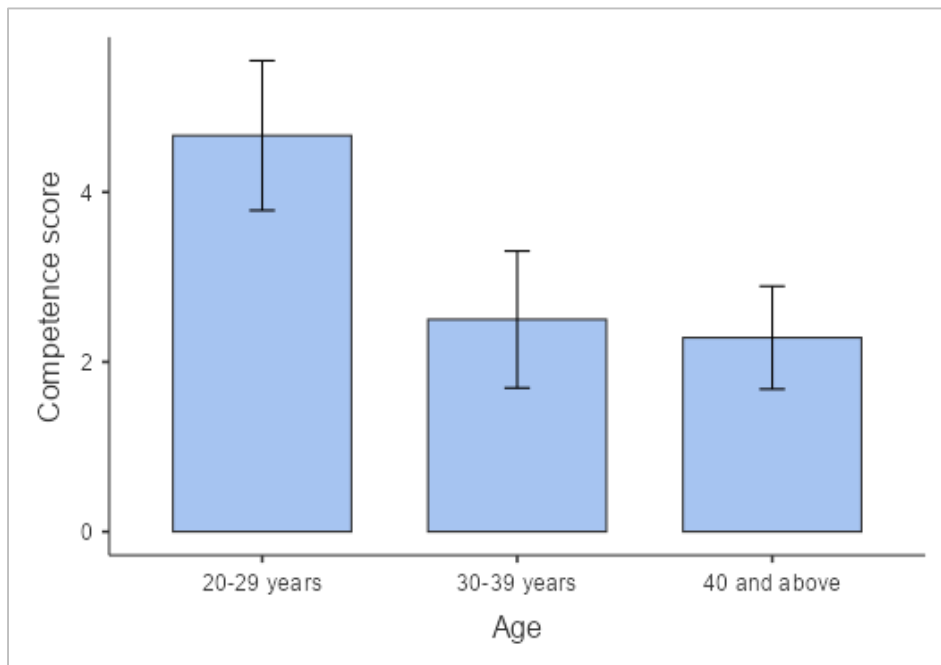
Observation is one of the most widely utilized assessment methods, but that its accuracy depends more on the precision with which direct observation and recording are carried out (Cumming et al., 2022). Interviews are useful since they give schedule detailed information that a questionnaire cannot supply (McConaughy & Whitcomb, 2022). The evaluation process is guided by facilitated interviews with teachers, parents, and students, which also address the concerns of everyone engaged with the learner. It paints a picture of how the informant sees students presenting issues (Forber-Pratt et al., 2022). Standardized tests compare a subject's performance to that of others who have taken the same test, whereas standardized tests include a consistent and uniform

technique for administering, scoring, and interpreting the behaviour of the subject (Merikangas et al., 2022). The above results, however, show that many teachers in the two sampled schools were not competent in using these methods, bringing to question the extent to which the schools assisted learners with EBDs to grow in their social skills.

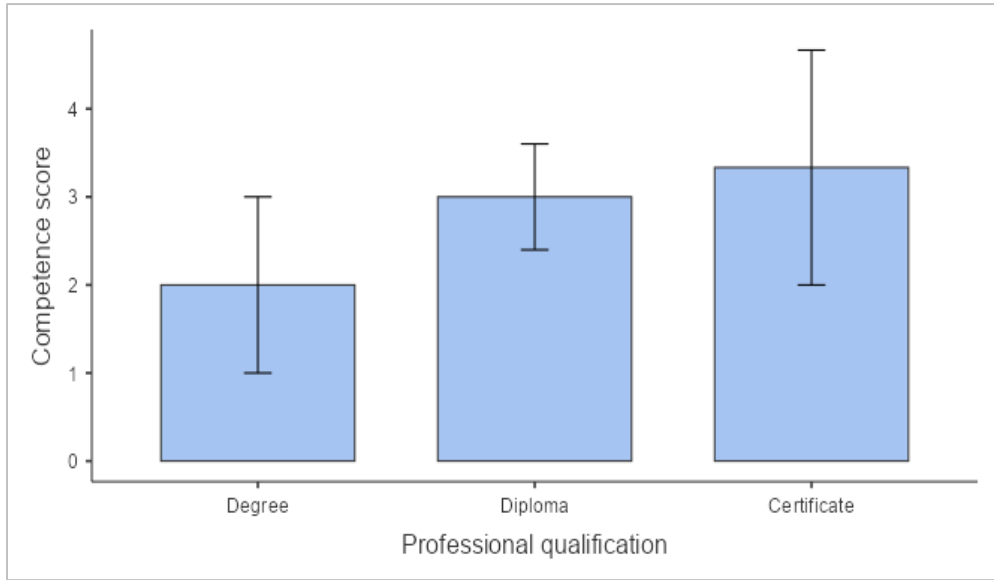
For further insights into teachers' competence, the study sought to establish whether having a formal training in EBD management influenced a teacher's competence in facilitating social skills among this population. The study also assessed the possible influence of other individual teacher characteristics, namely, gender, age, professional qualification, and experience. For this task, responses to the competence items were coded as follows: 0 = not competent, 1 = not sure, and 2 = competent. Composite competence scores were computed for each participant as the sum of their scores in each technique, such that a high score would indicate high competence. The minimum and maximum composite scores a participant could attain were 0 (not competent) to 8 (highest competence). The composites were then compared for across selected characteristics. Mean composites scores across these categories were as shown in Figure 4.5 to Figure 4.9. As a note, some categories had very few participants. Consequently, for the variables age, professional qualification, and work experience, the categories were re-grouped into three categories, in each case, for meaningful statistical comparisons.



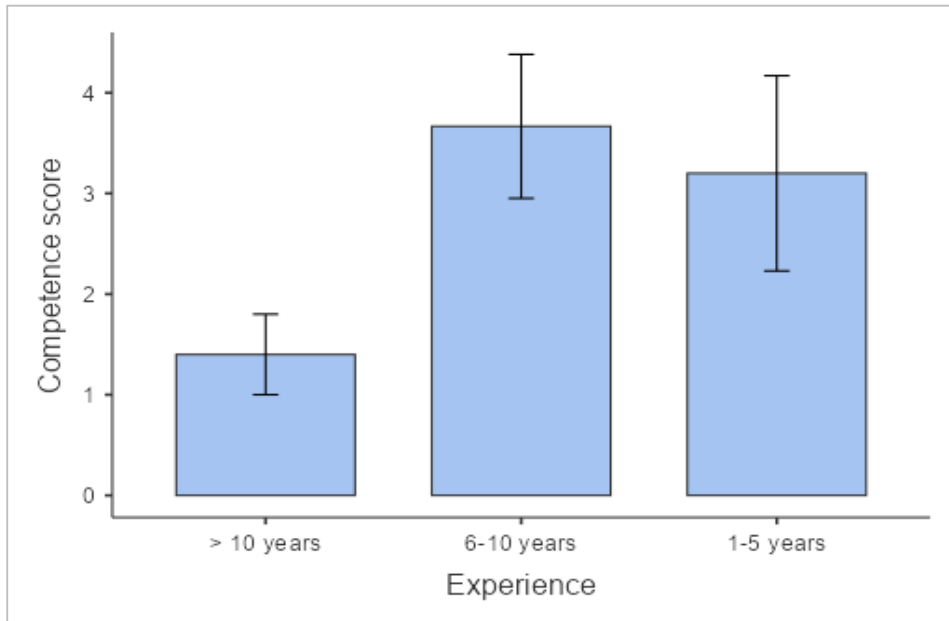
**Figure 4.5: Competence in Identifying Learners with EBDs by Gender**



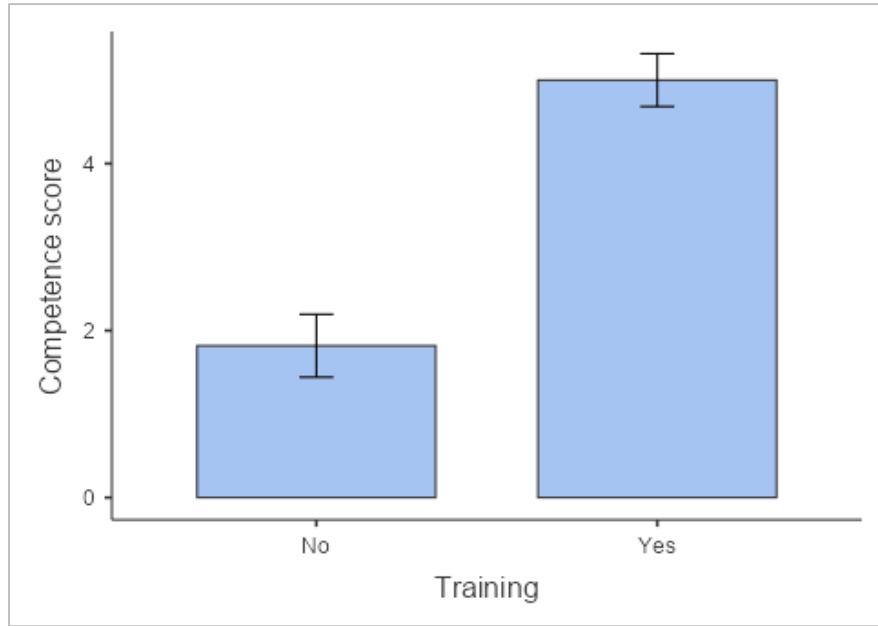
**Figure 4.6: Competence in Identifying Learners with EBDs by Age**



**Figure 4.7: Competence in Identifying Learners with EBDs by Professional Qualification**



**Figure 4.8: Competence in Identifying Learners with EBDs by Experience**



**Figure 4.9: Competence in Identifying Learners with EBDs by Training**

Figure 4.5 depicts that female and male teachers had, near equal competencies. The mean competence scores for male and female teachers were 3.0 ( $SD = 2.19$ ) and 2.70 ( $SD = 1.77$ ). Thus, although male teachers had, on average, higher scores, the difference was only marginal. As shown in Table 4.7, the independent samples t-test confirmed that the difference in competence scores due to gender was non-significant at the 95% confidence level ( $t = -2.19, p = 0.768$ ).

**Table 4.7: Inferential Tests for Mean Comparisons of Composite SSRS-T Scores by Gender and Age Categories**

Variable	Test Statistic (t/F) **	Df	P
Gender	-2.19	14	0.768
Age	2.38	2, 13	0.173
Professional qualification	0.396	2, 13	0.694
Experience	4.21	2, 13	0.058
Training	5.25	14	< 0.001

\* Gender and training comparisons are based on independent samples t-test; comparisons for age, professional qualification, and experience are based on one-way ANOVA

+ Homogeneity and normality assumptions assumed based on Levene's and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, respectively ( $p > 0.05$ )

A look at Figure 4.6 suggests that teachers aged 20-29 years had, on average, higher competence scores than those in higher age groups. The mean scores for participants aged 20-29 years was 4.67 ( $SD = 1.53$ ), while the corresponding scores for those aged 30-39 years and above 40 years were 2.50 ( $SD = 1.97$ ) and 2.69 ( $SD = 1.60$ ). However, the results of one-way ANOVA (Table 4.6) showed that the difference was significant. Post-hoc comparisons using Turkey's HSD test revealed no significant difference between any two age groups. Thus, for this sample, a teacher's age did not appear to significantly influence their competence in identifying learners with EBDs.

From Figure 4.7, there were marginal differences in competence scores across the three professional qualification categories. On average, those with a certificate ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ) and at least an undergraduate degree ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 2.00$ ) had the highest and lowest competence scores, respectively. The corresponding value for those with a diploma was 3.00 ( $M = 1.80$ ). However, all the error bars overlapped, suggesting that the differences between them were non-significant. One-way ANOVA verified (Table 4.6) that the difference in participants' competence scores due to their professional qualification was non-significant ( $F = 0.396$ ,  $p = 0.694$ ).

Figure 4.8 suggests that those with 6-10 years had significantly higher competence scores than those above ten years. These two groups had the highest ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 1.751$ ) and lowest ( $M = 1.40$ ,  $SD = 0.894$ ) mean scores, respectively. The corresponding score for those with an experience of 1-5 years was 3.20 ( $SD = 2.168$ ). Although the error bars suggested a significant difference, the one-way ANOVA test (Table 4.6) could not verify the bar plots ( $F = 4.21$ ,  $p = 0.058$ ).

Finally, as shown in Figure 4.9, there were notable differences in the scores for those who had and those who had not received a formal training in EBDs. The bars indicate that participants with a formal training in EBD had a higher competence in identifying learners with these conditions

compared to those who had not received such training. On average, trained teachers ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) were nearly three times more competent than those without a formal training ( $M = 1.82$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ). As shown in Table 4.4, the result of the t-test indicated a significant difference in the mean competence between teachers with and those without a formal training in EBDs ( $t = 5.25$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, for this sample, having a formal training in EBDs was associated with high competence in identifying these conditions.

Studies on the relationship between gender and teachers' interactions with learners with EBDs point to conflicting conclusions. While some suggest that male teachers have a higher understanding of EBD characteristics, other indicate that females perform better than their male peers, while others have established no significant relationship between the two variables (Abaoud & Almalki, 2015; Alhossein, 2016; Hanson, 2020). Similar discrepancies are evident for other teacher characteristics, such as age, professional qualification, and experience (Alkahtani, 2022; Ismail et al., 2018). These inconsistencies may be attributed to multiple factors, such as differences in sample compositions, study designs, and specific methods used. The present study established no significant relationship between a teacher's competence in identifying learners with EBDs and either of these variables. A possible explanation is that most of the teachers, irrespective of their demographics, had low competence in identifying learners with EBDs. In that case, any variation in individual teacher characteristics would produce a minimal difference in their competence.

The only factor that seemed to significantly influence teachers' competence is access to a formal training in EBD management. On average, teachers with a formal training in EBDs were nearly three times more competent than those without such training. These findings are in agreement with those of Wambui (2022), who found that teachers who were well-trained in social-emotional

learning demonstrated improved teacher-student relationships and were better able to address the needs of learners with social skill deficits. There is increasing emphasis on the need for teachers to be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to offer specialised support to learners with EBDs (Boelens et al., 2018). Formal trainings create excellent opportunities to offer such support. According to Elam (2016), the focus of such training should be to equip teachers with the skills needed to understand the nature of EBDs and provide individualised support to learners with these conditions. However, as evident in this study, most teachers in the sampled schools had no such training, a factor that likely compromised their capacity to facilitate social skills among these learners. Given the relatively high presence of learners with EBDs in these schools, such training may put teachers in a better position to offer quality education to members of this population.

#### **4.4.2 Administrators' Perspectives on Teachers' Competence**

During interviews, the administrators were asked whether their teachers were trained and qualified to handle learners with an emotional and behavioural disorder. A scrutiny of their responses isolated three broad themes in this regard: factors contributing to emotional/behavioural problems, a lack of specialised training, and ineffectiveness in existing strategies.

##### **4.4.2.1 Factors Contributing to Emotional and Behavioural Problems**

The administrators pointed to several potential factors associated with EBDs among learners in their schools, including poor social acceptance, difficulty adapting to new situations, and a lack of personal responsibility. For example, a participant from School A stated,

*Aggressive students often face social rejection, which led to violence and isolation. When these rejections and isolation persisted, these students may become more troubled and develop emotional problems.*

Similarly, from School B, an administrator stated,

*Learners with behavioural issues may, for example, have difficulties adjusting to new environments or changes in routine and many of them exhibit poor relationships with peers and teachers. The teacher must, therefore, have adequate skills to help these learners overcome their problems. Otherwise, the issues might get worse and more persistent.*

At least two conclusions can be drawn from such sentiments. Firstly, learners with EBDs tend to have poor social skills, such as those needed to negotiate positive relationships, contend with rejections, and adjust to new environments. If these skills are not nurtured, the problems may aggravate to higher levels. These findings corroborate the study by Mokoena et al. (2023), which highlights that emotional and behavioural challenges are often exacerbated by issues such as poor peer relationships and inability to cope with change. Secondly, teachers need to be equipped with strategies to help such learners navigate social challenges and adjust to changes, as these factors significantly contribute to emotional and behavioural issues. This is in line with the findings of Jones and Anderson (2020), who assert that social skills training is essential for learners with EBD. However, as captured in the second theme, many teachers in these schools lack of specialized support for these learners improve their social skills.

#### **4.4.2.2 Lack of Specialized Training for Teachers**

Administrators noted that teachers in the selected schools were often not specially trained to handle learners with EBDs. For example, one administrator from School A stated,

*Lack of training for EBDs is a significant challenge, not only in this school, but countrywide. In this school, for example, only the heads of guidance and counselling are assigned to deal with EBD learners, but they lacked specialized training.*

Another participant from the same school echoed,

*We don't have specialist therapists and our teachers lack formal training on behavioural problems. We are forced to rely on conventional methods to handle EBD learners. We know they aren't the best, but that's the much we can do.*

The above sentiments highlight a significant gap in the professional development for teachers working with learners with EBDs in Kayole Zone. The absence of specialized training may hinder teachers' ability to address the specific needs of these learners effectively. This finding concurs with that of de Swart (2023), who noted that a lack of qualified teachers to work with EBD learners is a widespread challenge in schools globally. Additionally, Smith et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of explicit social-emotional learning interventions for students with EBD, which require well-trained teachers. However, the lack of specialised training, as evident in the current study, highlights a significant challenge in implementing effective social skills training for learners with EBDs and managing the underlying causes of EBD in the classroom. This gap in teacher competencies points to the need for more targeted teacher training programs to enhance their ability to manage and support learners with EBD.

#### **4.4.2.3 Ineffectiveness of Current Instructional Strategies**

The administrators were of the view that the instructional strategies used in the classroom were largely ineffective in addressing the needs of learners with EBDs. This ineffectiveness was, in turn, attributed mostly to inadequate training. On this note, an administrator from School B remarked,

*Even though many instructional methods are employed by teachers, they were often ineffective due to the habitual nature of EBD behaviours, and teachers are not well trained in handling these learners.*

Another interviewee from school A stated,

*Many of these learners [tend to] reject responsibility, do not initiate activities, and lack organizational skills, which make it difficult to apply effective teaching strategies.*

The above responses suggest that the current instructional strategies are not adequately tailored to meet the needs of learners with EBD, thus affecting their academic performance and social skills development. Cumming et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of observation and continuous assessment in managing learners with behavioural issues. While the administrators in this study suggest that the instructional strategies were ineffective, Cumming et al.'s research highlights that effective classroom management and teaching methods, such as continuous observation and tailored interventions, could be crucial in addressing the needs of learners with EBD. This discrepancy points to the necessity of, not only adopting diverse instructional strategies, but also ensuring that they are properly aligned with the specific needs of EBD learners.

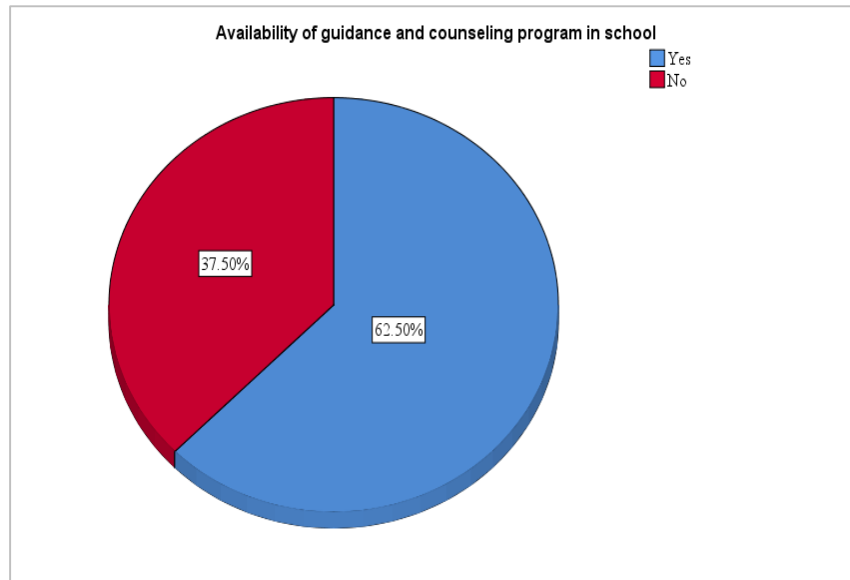
#### **4.5 Intervention Strategies Teachers Used to Enhance Social Skills among Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders**

The third objective of this study was to explore intervention strategies teachers use to influence social skills on learners with EBDs in Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi County. Data on this objective also came from teachers and administrators. Their responses are discussed under three sub-sections: guidance and counselling, assessments for identifying learners with EBDs, and effectiveness of intervention strategies.

##### **4.5.1 Availability of Guidance and Counselling Programmes in Schools**

Effective guidance and counselling programs assume vital roles in promoting social skills among learners with EBDs (Casey, 2012). Therefore, the researcher wanted to inquire from teachers whether their schools have a guidance and counselling program. Figure 4.10 presents the results. From the figure, more than half (62.5%,  $n = 10$ ) of the teachers indicated that there were functional

guidance and counselling programmes in their respective schools. The other 37.5% ( $n = 6$ ) indicated that such programmes were not available in their school.



**Figure 4.10: Availability of Guidance and Counselling Program in School**

The difficulty with social skills is measurable and treatable in the context of school counselling. This is corroborated by Jiya's (2022) findings, which showed that addressing social skills challenges should be deliberately planned and carried out through school counselling, infusing or integrating social skill components into the core curriculum, and regularly planning group activities that will enable students to demonstrate social competence. It was encouraging to observe that the two schools had functioning guidance and counselling programmes. This positive result notwithstanding, why would over a third (38%) of teachers indicate that their school had no such programme? A plausible explanation is that these teachers were not aware of the existence of such programmes. In that case, there is a need for the management of these schools ensure that all teachers are aware and make optimal use of these resources.

Apart from teachers, administrators were also asked to comment on the effectiveness of the school guidance and counselling programmes to assist learners with EBD in their school during the interviews. In response, a participant from school B said,

*Guidance and counselling programs helps to assess the sources of stress and anger management among children with EBDs. It also opens the minds of the young school-going children seeking the service to take preventive measures of being influenced by other peers to engage in violence, theft and sexual activities at an early age.*

Another participant from school A remarked,

*Guidance and counselling has reduced the truant behaviour in our school. Physical discussion with the children tend to make the open their minds and share their personal problems.*

The results of this study suggest that the administrators considered counselling and guiding a valuable tool in effective tool in learner behaviour management. According to Karim (2022), tailored education plans should be created for each learner that may not be able to learn effectively in an inclusive environment owing to a disability or other factors. Effective guidance and counselling programs are valuable tools in this regard. However, from teachers' responses, it was apparent the existing guidance and counselling programs in the two schools did not realise optimal outcomes, considering that a substantial proportion of teachers seemed not to know of their existence. This observation is consistent with the findings of Farley et al. (2022), who noted that although counselling services are crucial for students with EBD, they were rarely delivered in middle schools in the United States and, when they were, many were of subpar quality.

#### **4.5.2 Identification of Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders**

During the interviews, administrators were asked whether their school carried out educational assessments to identify learners with special educational needs and disabilities. There responses

highlighted the need for teachers in these schools to be equipped with essential knowledge, skills, and tools to facilitate the identification of learners with EBDs. A participant from School A noted,

*Even though it is very important to conduct, educational assessments to identify learners with special educational needs and disabilities, we rarely do it. However, when we receive a medical history of a child concerning disorder, we would prefer the parent to transfer such special cases to special units if we don't have the capacity to handle learners with such conditions.*

Another participant from School B remarked,

*We do [assessments] sometimes and if the case can be managed, it means it is mild. Nonetheless, serious cases would require specialists, and we don't have them here.*

Finally, another participant from this school explained,

*Conducting educational assessments to identify learners with special educational needs and disabilities needs to be done by specialists. However, we do not have any teacher-specialist specifically trained to guide, handle and manage children with EBDs.*

At least two conclusions can be drawn from the above sentiments. Firstly, although the administrators acknowledge the importance of identification assessments for learners with EBDs, they are rarely conducted in public primary schools in Kayole Zone. Secondly, teachers in these schools do not have the essentials – knowledge, skills, and tools – to perform such assessments and the institutions lack trained specialists. As highlighted previously, effective identification of learners with EBDs allows teachers to understand their specific needs, design and implement appropriate interventions, and provide the needed support (Merikangas et al., 2022; Wambui, 2022). Effective identification, however, requires teachers to be competent in applying various assessment methods and tools (Elam, 2016). This, in turn, would only be successful if teachers had the knowledge and experience to help them identify such learners. Yet, from the administrators'

responses, teachers in these schools were not trained in EBD assessment and identification procedures, a factor that compromised the amount and quality of support provided to such learners. These findings draw support from a similar study conducted in Kiambu County, in which Gathua et al. (2015) established that teachers in primary schools in the county used ineffective methods and strategies to identify learners with EBDs and manage their behaviours. Notably, nearly a decade has elapsed since Gathua et al.'s paper was published, suggesting that little or no progress has been done in this area.

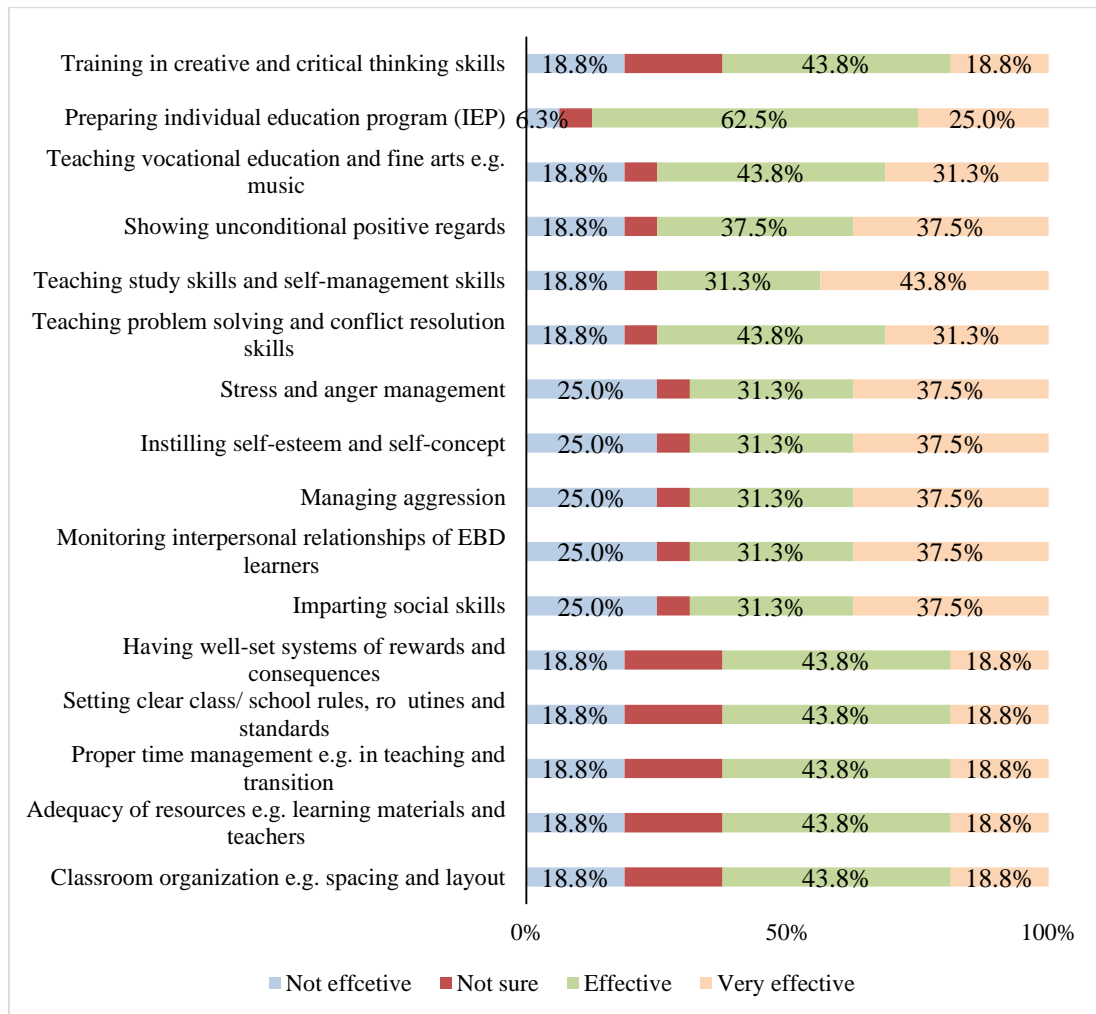
It is, however, noteworthy to point out an apparent discrepancy in teachers' and administrators' responses. According to the results shown in Figure 4.3, nearly a third of the teachers indicated that they were trained in EBD management. This finding seems to contradict administrators' views that their schools lacked teachers trained in EBD learner assessment and identification. At least two factors may account for this apparent discrepancy. Firstly, it may be that the administrators are not aware that some teachers in their schools are trained in EBD management. Another possibility is that existing training programmes do not adequately prepare teachers to identify and offer specialised support to learners with EBDs in their schools. In that case, there is a need for the government to evaluate the quality of existing training programmes to ensure they equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills needed to meet the needs of learners with EBDs.

#### **4.5.3 Effectiveness of Intervention Strategies Utilised by Teachers**

The study also sought to establish whether the interventions used by teachers are effective at helping learners with EBDs improve their social skills. Teachers were presented with a set of 16 strategies and prompted to rate their effectiveness in enhancing social skills among this population.

Both frequencies and means were used to analyse their responses and the results were as presented in Figure 4.11 and Table 4.8.

From Figure 4.11, the majority (over 62%) of teachers rated all the 16 strategies as either effective or very effective. With a mean score of 3.06 ( $SD = 0.772$ ), the use of Individualised Education Programmes (IEPs) was the highest rated strategy. In total, 87.5% ( $n = 10$ ) indicated that the preparation of IEPs is effective or very effective in addressing social skills deficits among learners with EBDs. This finding concurs with the work of Parker et al. (2021), who highlighted the importance of individualized behavioural interventions tailored to the unique needs of learners with EBD. Individualised education programmes, as a form of personalised support, have been shown to effectively address the specific challenges of learners with EBD (Parker et al., 2021), which aligns with the teachers' ratings in the current study.



**Figure 4.11: Effectiveness of Intervention Strategies Utilized by Teachers**

Teaching study and self-management skills, vocational education, instilling problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, and showing unconditional positive regard also had high ratings (Table 4.8). From Figure 4.11, 75.0% rated each of these items as either effective or very effective. The other remaining strategies, such as setting clear class rules, teaching study skills, and managing time effectively were also considered effective or very effective by a sub, indicating the significance of structured and well-organized classroom environments in facilitating positive social interactions. Indeed, all of the 16 methods had mean scores were above 2.6/4 (or 65%). These findings corroborate those of Abdullahi et al. (2021), who emphasized the role of clear

structures, such as setting rules and routines, in enhancing social behaviours among learners with EBD. The clear and consistent application of rules creates an environment in which learners can thrive socially, which is critical for learners with behavioural difficulties who may struggle with social cues and appropriate conduct.

**Table 4.8: Mean and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Ratings of Intervention Strategies**

<b>Item</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Classroom organization e.g. spacing and layout	16	2.625	1.025
Adequacy of resources e.g. learning materials and teachers	16	2.625	1.025
Proper time management e.g. in teaching and transition	16	2.625	1.025
Setting clear class/ school rules, routines and standards	16	2.625	1.025
Having well-set systems of rewards and consequences	16	2.625	1.025
Imparting social skills	16	2.813	1.223
Monitoring interpersonal relationships of EBD learners	16	2.813	1.223
Managing aggression	16	2.813	1.223
Instilling self-esteem and self-concept	16	2.813	1.223
Stress and anger management	16	2.813	1.223
Teaching problem solving and conflict resolution skills	16	2.875	1.088
Teaching study skills and self-management skills	16	3.000	1.155
Showing unconditional positive regards	16	2.938	1.124
Teaching vocational education and fine arts e.g. music	16	2.875	1.088
Preparing individual education program	16	3.063	.772
Training in creative and critical thinking skills	16	2.625	1.025

For additional information, the administrators in the sample were asked to briefly explain the programs they put in place for learners with any particular disabilities in their school. A participant from school B explained that,

*Setting clear class/ school rules, routines and standards enable EBD learners acquire social skills that enable them to build healthy social relationships and deal with social problems.*

Another participant from school C remarked,

*Monitoring interpersonal relationships of EBD learners enable students to learn to evaluate and self-reinforce themselves. It allows them to pay close attention to their behaviour. Self-monitoring consists of two parts; students tracking their own data and comparing data to their previous data to see improvement in their behaviour.*

The above sentiments concur with that of Hayes (2019) that explicitly teaching students self-monitoring skills promotes independence and responsibility over one's own actions. Teaching study skills and self-management skills, preparing IEPs, training in creative and critical thinking skills, teaching vocational education and fine arts, teaching study skills and self-management skills, setting clear class/ school rules, adequacy of resources and classroom organisation were very effective were the main strategies reported. These strategies are all directed to change the behaviour of learners with the EBDs. In contrast to the present results, Maina (2015) found that only about two-fifths of teachers in primary schools in Thika Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya, believed that behaviour strategies were helpful, while a similar percentage said they were ineffective and a quarter were unsure. Managing aggression received the highest ranking (53%) while cultivating a good self-image received 50% as an efficient behaviour management technique. Overall, the above findings stress the importance of teachers using effective strategies to promote social skills among learners with EBDs in the country.

#### **4.6 Challenges Encountered by Teachers Promoting Social Skills for Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders**

The final objective of this study was to investigate the social interaction challenges encountered by encountered by teachers in handling EBD learners with social skill deficit in Embakasi Sub-County. Teachers were asked to rate each item attributed to the challenges they encountered when handling learners with EBDs using a three-point scale ranging from 'not serious' to 'serious'. Their

responses were coded as follows: 1 = not serious, 2 = not sure, and 3 = serious. The means were computed for each item and were as shown in Table 4.9. A mean score above 2.0 indicates that, on average, the problem was a serious one among all the teachers in the sample.

**Table 4.9: Mean and Standard Deviation for challenges Faced by Teachers**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Lack of specialized training	16	2.625	.500
Problem identifying learners with EBDs	16	2.437	.727
Adaptation of curriculum and instructional methods	16	2.500	.730
School /class environmental management	16	2.688	.479
Lack of teaching and learning resources	16	2.250	.775
High enrolment and overcrowded classes	16	2.000	.817

All but one item (high enrolment/overcrowded classes) had a mean score above 2.0, suggesting that on, average, teachers considered these issues as serious. The highest rated items were about school/class environmental management ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 0.479$ ) and lack of specialized training ( $M = 2.63$ ,  $SD = 0.500$ ). Difficulties adapting the curriculum and instructional methods ( $M = 2.50$ ;  $SD = 0.730$ ), problems identifying learners with EBDs ( $M = 2.44$ ,  $SD = 0.727$ ), and lack of teaching and learning resources ( $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = 0.775$ ) were also considered serious challenges.

The above results suggest that problems managing the school or classroom environment are considered the most serious obstacle to promoting social skills among learners with EBDs in public primary schools in Kayole Zone, Embakasi Sub-County. This finding concurs with the results of Pretorius et al. (2023), who also identified environmental management as a major challenge, with teachers feeling overwhelmed by the need to maintain discipline and foster positive social interactions simultaneously. This finding further corroborates the sentiments shared by school administrators, such as one from School C, who emphasized that effective environmental

management may require better teacher training and resource allocation, which, at the time of the study, were at low levels. Effective environmental management strategies, including clearer classroom structures and support systems, should be prioritized in teacher training. Schools should aim to provide teachers with a more controlled environment, supported by appropriate resources and adequate professional development.

In addition to environment management, the other items assessed in this study were also considered serious. Such issues have been reported by other studies in Kenya and elsewhere (Gathua et al., 2015; Gunter et al., 2021; Lindsey et al., 2022). The fact that all were rated as serious problems further add weight to the view that existing programmes for promoting social skills among learners with EBDs in these schools were not effective, an observation that was also stressed during the interviews. For example, when asked what could be done to improve the experiences of learners with EBDs, an interviewee from School A said,

*I think the Ministry of education should increase the number of teaching and learning resources to enable pupils, especially those with some kinds of special needs meet their needs while learning.”*

Another participant from School B remarked,

*It is key to provide specialized training to all teachers. This way, it will be possible for all teachers to handle and manage all kinds of children with children with EBDs in schools.*

The above sentiments imply that development of social skills among children are predetermined by various personal characteristics which must be nurtured accordingly. This would only be successful if teachers have the knowledge and experience that would help in identifying weaknesses and improving on the same by employing appropriate strategies. The administrators

were also asked to state the challenges or hindrances they encounter while teaching learners with emotional and behavioural disorders. From School B, an interviewee noted,

*Development of peer relationship has been a challenge because the deviation between EBDs is wide. Some children exhibit severe deviant behaviours while others have mild deviant behaviours that make it somehow a challenge to use a similar intervention strategy for a group rather than individuals.” (A teacher respondent) ”*

Another participant from school D remarked,

*The high number of enrolment rate make it somehow impossible to individually attend to each and every child. So it is a challenge to manage the EBDs as the number of the teachers we have dealing with the counselling cannot meet the high number of children in school.”*

The above findings indicate that the high pupil-teacher ratio is a key issues affecting the handling of learners with EBDs in most schools under the study. Working with students with EBDs is often considered a demanding and complex process (Gilmour et al., 2021). Consequently, teachers need to be adequately prepared to ensure rich interactions and facilitate social skills development among these learners. However, the above results suggest teacher preparedness in public primary schools in Kayole Zone, Embakasi Sub-County, was low due to multiple challenges.

The lack of specialized training emerged as another significant challenge faced by teachers. This finding is in line with Gunter et al. (2021), who pointed out that teachers globally often struggle due to inadequate training, particularly in managing diverse behavioural disorders and facilitating social skill development among learners with special needs. Similar sentiments were echoed by participants in this study, such as the teacher from School B, who suggested that specialized training should be provided to teachers to enable them to manage children with EBD effectively.

Teachers also identified the challenge of adapting the curriculum and instructional methods to meet the needs of learners with EBD. This finding corroborates the views of Lindsey et al. (2022), who found that teachers worldwide face difficulties in tailoring their teaching strategies for diverse learners, especially those with EBD. One of the participants from School A shared that the newly introduced Competency-Based Curriculum had facilitated greater engagement between parents and children, potentially aiding in identifying behavioural challenges. However, while the curriculum may have been adapted, teachers still struggle with delivering it effectively to learners with EBD due to a lack of specific instructional strategies.

Teachers and administrators also reported difficulties identifying learners with EBDs, highlighting the complexity of behavioural disorders and the need for more structured identification methods. As Adeyemi et al. (2021) suggests, difficulty in recognising learners with EBDs is exacerbated by the lack of clear diagnostic tools. This finding was reflected in the experiences of participants, such as a teacher from School B, who noted that the high enrolment rates made it difficult to give individualised attention, which may have further delayed the identification of learners with EBDs.

The challenge of inadequate teaching and learning resources was identified as another barrier to effective teaching. This issue is consistent with findings from Pretorius et al. (2023) and Shahin et al. (2022), who found that insufficient resources hindered teachers' ability to implement interventions for learners with EBD. One teacher from School E suggested that increasing the availability of resources would help meet the educational needs of learners with special needs. Schools need to allocate sufficient resources, including specialized tools and materials that cater to the needs of learners with EBD. In particular, resources aimed at fostering social skills development should be prioritized in teacher training and curriculum planning.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This study investigated teacher intervention strategies to improve social skills among learners with EBDs in primary schools, Nairobi City County, Kenya. Focusing on two selected primary schools in Kayole Zone, Embakasi Sub-County, the study assessed social skills deficit among learners with EBDs, teacher competencies in facilitating social skills among these learners, the intervention strategies teachers use to enhance these skills, and the challenges encountered by teachers in their efforts to facilitate the social skills of learners with EBDs. Data came from questionnaires to teachers, interviews with administrators, and a social skills assessment test administered to class seven learners in the two schools identified as having EBDs. The results were as presented and discussed in the previous chapter. Here, the main findings are summarised, conclusions drawn, and recommendations for practice and research provided.

#### **5.2 Summary of the Main Findings**

##### **5.2.1 Identifying Social Skill Deficits of Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Embakasi Sub-County**

The first objective focused on identifying social skill deficits among learners with EBDs in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County. The study focused on class seven learners in two selected schools in Kayole zone, Embakasi Sub-County. Interviews with administrators from the two selected schools revealed that many learners in the sub-county, specifically in Kayole Zone, engaged in a wide range of high-profile disruptive behaviours that were consistent with EBDs. A screening test using the VAS-T did establish that approximately 13% of class seven learners in the two schools had EBDs.

An assessment test using the SSRS-T questionnaire revealed that on average, class seven learners with EBDs in the two schools performed poorly (below 50%) in all the social skills assessed, suggesting that they were low in these skills. The mean composite SSRS-T score was considered very low. A scrutiny of individual composite scores showed that all the sampled learners had high social skill deficits, with all of them attaining a score below the minimum threshold for a satisfactory performance. Mean comparisons using the independent samples t-test showed that on average, the deficits were significantly more pronounced for female than male learners with EBDs. The differences due to age categories were non-significant.

### **5.2.2 Determining Teachers' Competencies in Facilitating Social Skills of Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Embakasi Sub-County**

The second objective was to determine teacher competencies in facilitating social skills of learners with EBDs in Embakasi Sub-County. Only less than a third of the teachers in the sample had undergone a formal training in EBD management. The others had no such training. The majority were either not competent or unsure in using various assessment methods for identifying learners with EBDs, namely observation, interviewing, testing, and medical screening. Of the individual teacher characteristics assessed, only having a formal training in EBD management significantly influenced their competencies in identifying learners with EBDs. The differences due to gender, age, professional qualification, and work experience were non-significant.

Interviews with administrators further revealed several issues with teacher competencies that were analysed and discussed around three broad themes: factors contributing to emotional/behavioural problems, a lack of specialised training, and ineffectiveness in instructional strategies. The factors identified as contributing to EBDs in these schools included poor social acceptance, difficulty adapting to new situations, and a lack of personal responsibility. The administrators highlighted

the need for teachers to be competent and equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to address these issues. However, they pointed out that teachers lacked specialised training to meet the needs of these learners. They were also of the view that the instructional strategies currently used in the classroom were largely ineffective, primarily due to inadequate training.

### **5.2.3 Establishing Intervention Strategies Teachers Use to Influence Social Skills of Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Embakasi Sub-County**

The third objective was to establish intervention strategies teachers used to influence social skills of learners with EBDs in Embakasi Sub-County. All the two schools had a guidance and counselling programme and the administrators felt that they were effective in combating behavioural problems. However, only less than two-thirds of the teachers indicated that there were guidance and counselling programmes in their schools. It was not apparent, from the findings, why some teachers would mention that these programmes were lacking in their schools, yet they were available. Interviews with the administrators further revealed that teachers rarely conducted assessments to identify learners with EBDs, mostly because they did not have essential resources, namely knowledge, skills, and required tools.

The study assessed teachers' perceptions of various intervention strategies recommended for use with learners with EBDs. The majority of teachers rated all the 16 strategies as either effective or very effective at helping learners with EBDs improve their social skills. The highest rated strategies were the use of IEPs, teaching study and self-management skills, vocational education, instilling problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, and showing unconditional positive regard.

#### **5.2.4 Finding Out Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Promoting Social Skills among Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Embakasi Sub-County**

The final objective of this study was to investigate the social interaction challenges encountered by encountered by teachers in handling EBD learners with social skill deficit in Embakasi Sub-County. Both teachers and administrators reported several challenges, notably, issues with school/class environmental management and the lack of specialised training. Difficulties adapting the curriculum and instructional methods, problems with identifying learners with EBDs, and inadequate teaching and learning resources were also considered serious obstacles.

#### **5.3 Conclusion**

At least six (6) major conclusions can be drawn from the above findings. First, a substantial proportion of learners in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County have EBDs. Although the study established a prevalence of about 13%, there is a possibility that some learners with EBDs were miss-identified, considering that many teachers had low knowledge of these conditions and hardly conducted assessments to identify such learners.

Secondly, learners with EBDs in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County have high social skill deficits. On average, each of the sampled learners had a very low SSRS-T score, with a maximum value way below the minimum threshold for a satisfactory performance. Indeed, all of sampled learners were deficient in all the social skill items assessed.

Thirdly, the majority of teachers in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County have low competencies in facilitating social skills among learners with EBDs. Less than a third had received a formal training in EBD management. The majority were either unsure or not competent in using various assessment tests for identifying learners with EBDs. Interviews with administrators further

revealed that teachers in the sub-county generally had low competencies, suggesting that even among those who had undergone EBD training, the programmes hardly equipped them with the required competencies.

Fourth, although most primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County have a guidance and counselling programmes, a substantial proportion of teachers are not aware of their existence. Although all the two samples schools had a guidance and counselling programme, which administrators considered effective, more than a third of the teachers mention that these programmes were lacking. The reasons for this discrepancy were beyond the scope of this study.

Although the majority of teachers in primary schools in Embakasis Sub-County are confident that recommended strategies for EBD management are effective, they rely mostly on ineffective instructional strategies for learners with these conditions. The over-reliance on ineffective methods is, in turn, primarily due to their low competencies and lack of specialised training in EBD management.

Lastly, teachers in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County encounter several serious obstacles against effective handling of learners with EBDs. In addition to a lack of specialised training, notable challenges include issues with school/class environmental management, difficulties adapting the curriculum and instructional methods, problems with identifying learners with EBDs, and inadequate instructional resources. The combination of these factors makes it difficult for these teachers to promote social skills for learners with EBDs in their schools.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher offers several recommendations for practice and further research.

### **5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy**

The study provides the following recommendations for practice:

- i. The management of primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County should ensure there are affective programmes and interventions to facilitate social skills among learners with EBDs in these institutions. The study established that a substantial proportion of learners in these schools have EBDs, all of which have significant social skill deficits.
- ii. Teachers in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County should use effective strategies to assess and identify learners with EBDs. There is a high possibility, based on the present findings, that many learners with these conditions remain unidentified.
- iii. Teachers in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County should ensure they use effective intervention strategies to facilitate social skills for learners with EBDs. Although all the sampled learners had significant social skill deficits, it was apparent that the intervention strategies employed by teachers were mostly ineffective and hardly addressed their needs.
- iv. The government, through the Ministry of Education, should organise for regular training opportunities in EBD management for primary school teachers Embakasi Sub-County to equip them with essential competencies needed to promote social skills among learners with these conditions. Most teachers had low competencies in promoting social skills for learners with EBDs, primarily due to a lack of specialised training. The low competencies, in turn, inhibited them from using effective intervention strategies for these learners.

- v. The Ministry of Education should ensure that existing training programmes are effective at equipping teachers with the competencies needed to facilitate social skills among learners with EBDs in the country. Although over a third of the teachers had undergone a formal training in EBD management, it was apparent that even these ones hardly used effective interventions to manage these conditions.
- vi. In addition to training, the Ministry of Education should ensure that primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County are equipped with the essential resources needed to promote social skills among learners with EBDs. The ministry, through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, should ensure the curriculum is designed in ways that make it easy for teachers to adapt it to the needs of learners with EBDs. These two – inadequate resources and issues with the curriculum – were identified as a serious obstacle against effective EBD management in these schools.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendations for Further Research**

- i. The current study was confined to primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County and, thus, the findings could not be generalised to other settings. Future studies could consider replicating these findings in other areas to provide a generalised understanding of the interventions used to promote social skills among learners with EBDs in the country.
- ii. There is the need for further research on the social skills of learners with EBDs in primary schools in Embakasis Sub-County and other parts of the country. Although this study established significant social skill deficits among the sampled learners, it was limited to class seven. Besides, due to the limitations in the screening tool used, the study focused

only on five social skill dimensions, namely, empathy, self-control, assertion, responsibility, and cooperation. Future studies could broaden the scope to other classes and dimensions of social skills.

- iii. Similarly, there is the need for further research on teacher competencies in facilitating social skills among learners in primary schools in Embakasi Sub-County and other parts of the country. The current study investigated only two aspects of teacher competency: training in EBD management and ability to identify learners with these conditions. Future studies could broaden the scope to other dimensions of teacher competency.
- iv. There is also the need for further research on individual teacher characteristics that may influence their competencies in promoting social skills among learners with EBDs. Of the factors identified, only having a formal training in EBD management seemed to influence teacher competency. However, the research in this area present mixed findings. Future studies could consider using more rigorous designs and large samples to ascertain the influence of these factors on teacher competency.
- v. Future studies could consider investigating teachers' awareness and use of existing guidance and counselling programmes in their schools. Although the researcher ascertained that all the sampled schools had a guidance and counselling programme, a sizable proportion of teachers indicated that such programmes were lacking. The reasons for this discrepancy was not clear and could be an area for further research. Whatever the reason, the findings imply that these teachers likely did not make effective use of these programmes because they were unaware of their existence. Consequently, future studies could investigate the effectiveness with which teachers in primary schools in Embakasi

Sub-County and other parts of the country use existing guidance and counselling programmes in their schools to facilitate social skills among learners with EBDs.

- vi. Finally, future studies could investigate the effectiveness of existing teacher training programmes for EBD management. Although over a third of the teachers indicated that they had a formal training in EBD management, further analyses revealed that in general, teachers in Embakasi Sub-County hardly implemented effective intervention strategies for learners with EBDs. Research into the effectiveness of these programmes could shed additional light into this apparent discrepancy.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Research Instruments

#### The Vanderbilt Assessment Scale

##### Information about the Child

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

##### Instructions

Please put a tick, for the item below, that describes this learner, now or within the past 6 months. Please think of the child's behaviour in the past 6 months. Each rating should be considered in the context of what is appropriate for the age of the child you are rating and should reflect that child's behaviour since the beginning of the school year.

Use the following scale: 0 = Never, 1 = occasionally, 2 = often, 3 = very often

<b>During the past six months, the child ...</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Is fearful, anxious or afraid				
Is afraid to try new things for fear of making mistakes				
Feel worthless or inferior				
Blames self for problems, feels guilty				
Feels lonely, unwanted, or unloved; complains that no one loves him or her				
Is sad, unhappy or depressed				
Is self-conscious or easily embarrassed				
Argues with adults				
Loses temper.				
Actively defies or refuses to go along with adult request or rules				
Deliberately annoys people				
Blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehaviours.				
Is touchy or easily annoyed by others.				
Has difficulty organizing tasks and activities				
Do not follow through when given directions and fails to finish tasks and activities.				

Bullies, threatens, or intimidates others.				
Starts physical fights.				
Lies to get out of trouble or to avoid obligations.				
Is truant from school without permission				
Is physically cruel to people				
Has stolen things that have value				
Deliberately destroys others' property				
Has used a weapon that can cause serious harm e.g. knife, sticks				
Leaves seat when remaining seated is expected				
Has deliberately set fires to cause damage				
Has broken into someone else home, business, or car.				
Has stayed out at night without permission				
Has run away from home overnight				
Has forced someone into sexual activity				

## Questionnaire for Teachers

Dear teacher,

I am Eunice Ngugi, a Master's student at Kenyatta University. I am currently conducting a study on intervention strategies to improve social skills among learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in primary schools in Nairobi City County. This study is part of the requirement for the award of a master's degree in education. I would appreciate assistance with data by answering the questions outlined below, to the best of your knowledge. The information in this data sheet will be strictly confidential and will not be used for any other purpose other than for this research. Your assistance in facilitating the same will be highly appreciated. Please **DO NOT** provide any information (e.g., phone numbers) that can identify you or any other person directly.

### INSTRUCTION

Please respond to all the questions below, indicating your answer with a tick where appropriate. Honest responses to all the questions are requested. There is no right or wrong answer; your opinion is what counts. Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this survey.

### Section A: Personal Data

1. Please indicate your gender
  - Female
  - Male
2. Please indicate your age bracket
  - 20-29 years
  - 30-39 years
  - 40-49 years
  - 50 years and above
3. What is your current professional qualification?
  - Certificate (P1)
  - Diploma
  - Undergraduate degree
  - Master's degree
  - Doctoral degree
  - Other (*specify*)
4. For how long have you been in the teaching service?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- Above 20 years

**Section B: The Social Skills Rating System**

5. Please think of this child and indicate how often they engage in the following. Use the following scale and tick where appropriate:

0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = very often

**Information about the Child**

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>How often does this child ...</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Produces correct schoolwork?			
Keeps his or her work area clean without being reminded?			
Responds appropriately to physical aggression from peers?			
Initiates conversations with peers?			
Volunteers to help peers on classroom tasks?			
Politely refuses unreasonable requests from others?			
Appropriately question rules that may be unfair?			
Responds appropriately to teasing by peers?			
Accept peers' ideas for group activities?			
Appropriately express feelings when wronged?			
Receive criticism well?			
Attend to your instructions?			
Use time appropriately while waiting for your help?			
Introduce himself or herself to new people without being told to?			
Compromise in conflict situations by changing own ideas to reach agreement?			
Acknowledge compliments or praise from peers?			

Easily make transition from one classroom activity to another?			
Control temper in conflict situations with peers?			
Finish class assignments within time limits?			
Listen to classmates when they present their work or ideas?			
Appear confident in social interactions with opposite-sex peers?			
Invite others to join in activities?			
Control temper in conflict situations with adults?			
Ignore peer distraction when doing classwork?			
Stand up for peers when he/she have been unfairly criticised?			
Put work materials or school property away?			
Appropriately tell you when he or she thinks you have treated him or her unfairly?			
Give compliments to members of the opposite sex?			
Comply with your directions?			
Respond appropriately to peer pressure?			

### Section C: Competencies in Facilitating Social Skills and Intervention Strategies

6. Are you trained in handling learners with emotional and behavioural disorders?

- No  
 Yes

7. The following are methods used to identify learners with emotional/ and behavioural disorders.

Please rate your competence in using each of the methods. Tick where appropriate.

Method for Identifying Learners with EBDs	I am ...		
	Not Competent	Not Sure	Competent
Observation			
Interviewing			
Testing			
Medical evaluation			
Other ( <i>specify</i> )			

8. Does the school have a guidance and counselling program?

- No
- Yes

9. The following are various intervention strategies teachers could use to promote social skills among learners with emotional and behavioural disorders. Rate your opinion of the statement provided by ticking the option in the box which is appropriate to you. Use the key below:

*Key: 0 = not effective, 1 = not sure, 2 = effective, 3 = very effective*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Classroom organization e.g. spacing and layout				
Adequacy of resources e.g. learning materials and teachers				
Proper time management e.g. in teaching and transition				
Setting clear class/ school rules, routines and standards				
Having well-set systems of rewards and consequences				
Imparting social skills				
Monitoring interpersonal relationships of EBD learners				
Managing aggression				
Instilling self-esteem and self-concept				
Stress and anger management				
Teaching problem solving and conflict resolution skills				
Teaching study skills and self-management skills				
Showing unconditional positive regards				
Teaching vocational education and fine arts e.g. music				
Preparing individual education program (IEP)				
Training in creative and critical thinking skills				

**Section D: Challenges in Facilitating Social Skills and Intervention Strategies**

10. The following are potential challenges teachers may face in the management of emotional behaviour disorders. Please rate how serious each item is in this school using the key below.

*Key: 0 = not at all serious, 1 = not sure, 2 = very serious*

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Lack of specialized training			
Problem identifying learners with EBDs			
Adapting the curriculum and instructional methods			
School /class environmental management			
Lack of teaching and learning resources			
High enrolment and overcrowded classes			
Other ( <i>specify</i> )			

**THANK YOU**

## **Interview Guide for Administrators**

### **Section A: Personal Data**

1. Your gender
  - Female
  - Male
2. Your age bracket
  - 25-30 years
  - 31-40 years
  - 41-50 years
  - 51-60 years
  - Above 60 years
3. What is your level of training?
  - Certificate in education administration-related course
  - Diploma in education administration-related course
  - Undergraduate degree in education or administration-related course
  - Master's degree in education or administration-related course
  - Doctoral degree in education or administration-related course
  - Other (*specify*)
4. For how long have you been in your current position?
  - 0-5 years
  - 6-10 years
  - 11-15 years
  - 16-20 years
  - Above 20 years

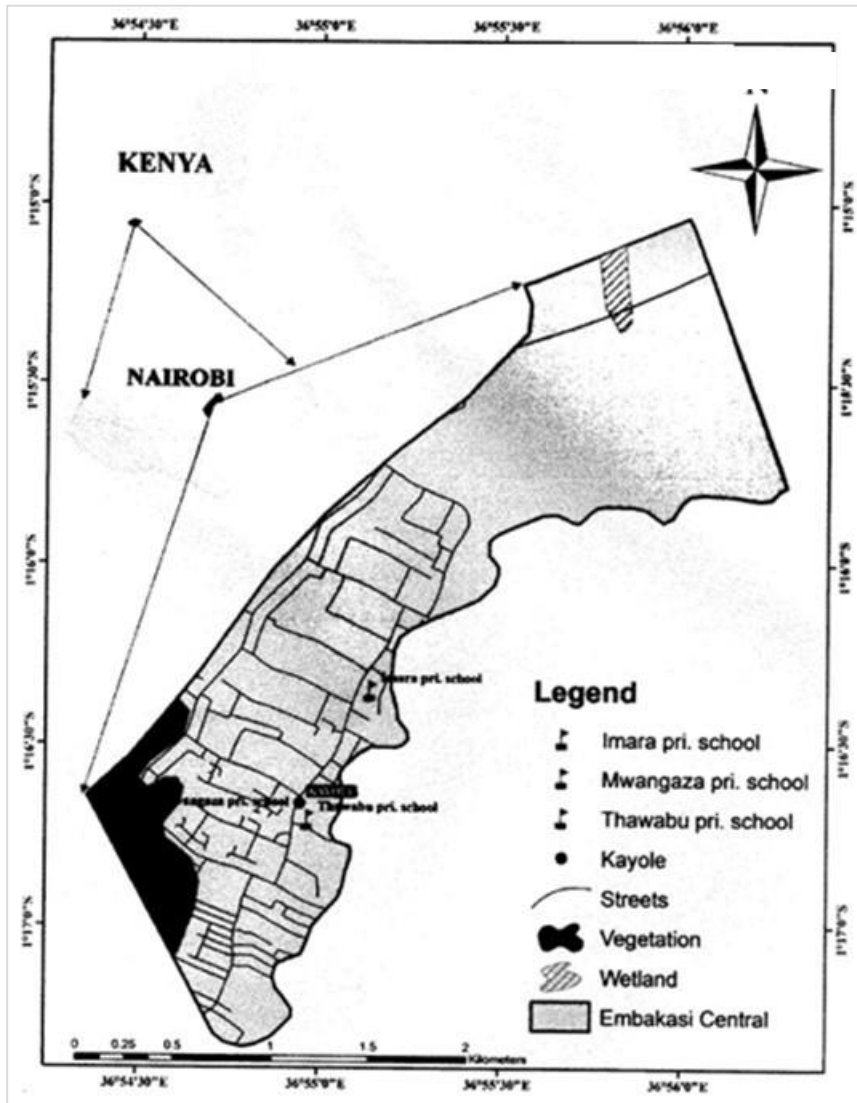
### **Section B: Interview Questions**

*During the interview, the researcher should ask the principal the following questions. The researcher will record or note participants' responses.*

1. Does your school have any special programs for students with disabilities?
2. Are there students in your school with social skills deficits associated with EBD?
3. Are your teachers trained /qualified to handle learners with an EBD?
4. Do you believe your school meets the educational needs of students with EBD?

5. How successful are teaching and learning strategies for EBD students in your school?
6. Do you have intervention approaches to improve social skill deficits for learner with EBD?
7. How would you assess EBD students' general academic performance?
8. What do you believe are the key emotional and behavioural triggers among students in your school?
9. What challenges or hindrances do you encounter while teaching learners with EBD?
10. What are some of the social interaction challenges encountered by learners with EBD in your school?

## Appendix II: Map of the Study Location Showing Embakasi Sub-County and Kayole Zone



## **Appendix III: Introduction Letter**

## **Appendix IV: Consent Form**

**Research Topic:** Teacher Intervention Strategies to Improve Social Skills among Learners with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Selected Primary Schools, Nairobi City County

### **Principal Investigator Details**

EUNICE NJUHI NGUGI

Kenyatta University,

Department of Special Needs Education

Phone: +254 722 560146

Email: [njuhingugicomfy@gmail.com](mailto:njuhingugicomfy@gmail.com)

### **Purpose**

1. You are being asked to take part in a research on the topic indicated above. The study's purpose is to assess teacher intervention strategies to improve social skills among learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in selected primary schools, Nairobi City County. This research has been approved by the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation. However, before you decide to participate, it is important that you understand why it is done and your expected involvement. Kindly read the following information carefully and ensure you understand it. Please ask the Principal Investigator (PI) for clarification about anything that is not clear.

### **Study Procedures**

2. The study will involve a survey. Participants will be required to respond to a set of questions in the form of questionnaires or interviews. They are expected to answer all the questions honestly and truthfully.

### **Benefits and Risks**

3. The study's findings may be relevant to various stakeholders in the education sector, including the education ministry, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, school administrators, the Teachers Service Commission, and teachers in primary schools in Kenya. They may rely on the results to develop policies and strategies for enhancing academic success and the overall well-being of learners with emotional and behavioural disorders. The researcher does not

foresee any factor that may expose participants to physical or non-physical harm. No direct compensation will be made to participants.

**Contact**

4. If you have questions at any time about this study or you experience adverse effects because of participating, you may reach the PI using her contact at the top of this form. If you have questions regarding your rights, or if problems arise which you do not feel comfortable discussing with the PI, please contact Kenyatta University’s Ethical Review Committee.

**Voluntary Participation**

5. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to give your consent. You are free to withdraw at any time, even after consenting, without giving a reason. A withdrawal will not affect the relationship you may have with the PI. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is complete, the data relating to you will be discarded.

**Consent**

6. I confirm that,
  - a. I have understood the research’s purpose, expected outcomes, and my involvement,
  - b. I have had the opportunity to ask relevant questions about the research and my expected roles, and
  - c. The Principal Investigator has answered all my questions satisfactorily.
7. I also understand that,
  - a. My participation in the project is voluntary and I am free to terminate my engagement at any point without having to give a reason for my participation,
  - b. I can withdraw information about myself at any point I chose to do so, and
  - c. I will be given a copy of this consent form.

8. Therefore,

I willingly agree to participate within the terms indicated in this form.


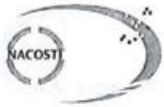



Participant’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix V: Authorisation Documents**

### **Approval from Graduate School**

**NACOSTI Permit**

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 418170	Date of Issue: 25/July/2022
<b>RESEARCH LICENSE</b>	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Ms.. EUNICE NJUHI NGUGI of Kenyatta University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: <b>INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS INTERVENTION STRATEGIES ON SOCIAL INTERACTION AMONG LEARNERS WITH EMOTONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DISORDERS IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS, NAIROBI CITY COUNTY</b> for the period ending : 25/July/2023.</p>	
License No: NACOSTI/P/22/19254	
418170 Applicant Identification Number	<i>Recommended</i> <i>M.</i> <i>18/10/2022</i>
	<i>W. M. Mwangi</i> Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code 
<p>NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.</p>	

**THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION ACT, 2013**

The Grant of Research Licenses is Guided by the **Science, Technology and Innovation (Research Licensing) Regulations, 2014**

**CONDITIONS**

1. The License is valid for the proposed **research, location and specified period**
2. The License any rights thereunder are **non-transferable**
3. The Licensee shall inform the relevant **County Director of Education, County Commissioner and County Governor** before commencement of the research
4. Excavation, filming and collection of **specimens are subject to further necessary clearance** from relevant Government Agencies
5. The License does not give authority to **transfer research materials**
6. NACOSTI may monitor and evaluate the **licensed research project**
7. The Licensee shall submit one **hard copy and upload a soft copy of their final report (thesis)** within one year of completion of the research
8. NACOSTI reserves the right to modify the **conditions of the License including cancellation** without prior notice

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation  
off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete,  
P. O. Box 30623, 00100 Nairobi, KENYA  
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Mobile: 0713 788 787 / 0735 404 245  
E-mail: [dg@nacosti.go.ke](mailto:dg@nacosti.go.ke) / [registry@nacosti.go.ke](mailto:registry@nacosti.go.ke)  
Website: [www.nacosti.go.ke](http://www.nacosti.go.ke)

**Approval from Embakasi Sub-County Education Office**

EMBAKASI SUB-COUNTY  
EDUCATION OFFICE NAIROBI  
03 NOV 2022  
P.O. BOX 74629-00200  
NAIROBI

Received 3/11/2022  
SMB  
Attention: HT -Thawabu  
-mwanga  
-imara prim  
Kindly take note  
and assist.  
Dr. Samuel Keng  
for SCS

Republic of Kenya  
**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**  
**STATE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING AND BASIC EDUCATION**

Telegrams: "SCHOOLING", Nairobi  
Telephone; Nairobi 020 2453699  
Email: rcenairobi@gmail.com  
cdenairobi@gmail.com

REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
NAIROBI REGION  
NYAYO HOUSE  
P.O. Box 74629 - 00200  
NAIROBI

When replying please quote  
Ref: RDE/NRB/RESEARCH/1/65 Vol.1

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2022


Ms. Eunice Njuhi Ngugi  
Kenyatta University

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

We are in receipt of a letter from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation regarding research authorization in Nairobi County on the topic: *"Influence of teachers intervention strategies on social interaction among learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in selected primary schools"*.

This office has no objection and authority is hereby granted for a period, ending 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 as indicated in the request letter.

Upon completion, you are advised to share your research findings with this and other relevant offices.

  
DR. GLADYS MALONZA  
FOR: REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
NAIROBI.  
0728807573

