

Perceived Need for Competence Need Satisfaction as Predictor of Transition among Form Two Students in Kisii County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

Reported low transition among secondary school students has drawn interest and attention among researchers. This is because transition determines how learners succeed from one academic level to the next and how they achieve life time goals. Research was guided by Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan 2002). The participants were 405 students (167 males, 238 females). The participants filled questionnaire items adapted from Multidimensional Psychological Needs Satisfaction Scale. The major finding showed that there is a significant positive relationship between respondents' competence and transition. ($r(403) = 0.22, p < .05$). Considering that more attention is paid to factors related to school infrastructure as students transit to secondary school, the study made some recommendations. They included encouraging students to develop inner satisfaction of Psychological needs satisfaction (competence). The researchers also recommended stakeholders to create an enabling school environment that enhance individual competence satisfaction among students. The research also recommended further research in the area of competence needs satisfaction as a predictor of transition.

Key words: Psychological needs Satisfaction, Competence, Predictor, Transition.

INTRODUCTION

Transitions are part of the human experience. While some transitions are predictable, others are not. Moreover, in some transitions, people have choices, while in others people have no say (Dray et al., 2014; Anderman & Midgley 1997). Further, Areba et al. (2013) asserts that psychological and developmental transition is one of the human aspects that advance over time. While different human beings handle change in different ways, it is evident that during human growth and development stages, transitions from childhood to adolescence often give rise to conflicting feelings and stress among adolescents who are usually in High school (WHO, 2017).

Childhood to adolescence transition coincides with a time when adolescents are also transitioning to secondary education (Hanewald, 2013). Therefore, school administrators, parents and teachers must approach the transition positively by providing information and inducting students into their new environment. In addition, teachers should arrange common activities between old students and teachers to foster closer relationships between the parties.

In education, there are typically three major points at which transition occurs: from nursery to elementary or primary school, from primary to secondary school, and from secondary school to tertiary or college education. While the impact of transition during their educational journey is varied, students often experience significant educational, social, emotional, physical, and developmental challenges that may adversely affect their academic performance. Therefore, to cope in secondary school, students must be physically and psychologically mature. The two aspects are indicators of proper preparedness and signify apt induction into school life (Sigei, 2013).

According to self-determination theory (SDT), individuals possess an innate tendency to reach their full potential and self-actualization by striving to satisfy three fundamental psychological needs: relatedness, competence, and

autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Competence is defined as the ability to use learned skills to interact with the environment effectively and efficiently. When children are given the chance to work on a task appropriate for their skill level and ability, their need is fulfilled. When students are able to carry out tasks successfully, they are able to maximize their potential. Furthermore, SDT asserts that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are necessary for human psychological development and functioning to be at its best (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For an individual to feel comfortable in any area of their life, these fundamental psychological needs must be satisfied.

The transition from primary to secondary school affects adolescents in four basic ways: it coincides with the onset of puberty, likely to worsen stress experienced during this critical stage of life and it increases academic responsibility, social, and emotional spheres. Adolescents with severe mental health issues face developmental changes associated with puberty, such as creating an identity and becoming more autonomous (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018). In addition to difficulties in school and risk-taking behaviors, teens with mental health concerns are more vulnerable to physical diseases, human rights violations, social isolation, discrimination, and stigma (which may affect their willingness to seek help). For people between the ages of 15 and 19, suicide is the fourth most common cause of death. Behavioral issues, anxiety, and depression are frequently the reason for suicide.

From a global view, the transition from childhood to adolescence has been seen to be a major developmental milestone. While some go over it successfully, for others, it sometimes fails or threatens to fail. This is evident among the majority of boys and girls who engage in different forms of rebellion as they seek to establish a sense of autonomy and separate identity (Denny et al., 2014). According to Henri et al. (2018), how students perceive secondary school life is closely related to their physical and psychological maturity level. Students should mature regarding the need for autonomy, competence and relatedness for psychological maturity. Students who are autonomous, competent, and relate well to others tend to navigate life smoothly (Deci & Ryan, 2015). Indeed, due to difficulties in transitioning, more than half of students in high school globally engage in open conflicts or rebellion as they seek to establish a sense of autonomy and separate identity (Denny et al., 2014).

In addition, secondary school students usually look forward to new experiences yet worry about the unknown as they transition from childhood into early adolescence throughout the journey in high school. This has seen more than half of students in high school engage in covert or open conflicts. It is, therefore, worth noting that millions of students who fail to transition smoothly during adolescence in many parts of the world are currently growing up under conditions that do not meet their enduring needs for optimal development (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Most developed and developing countries have invested significantly in education, and almost 90 per cent of their citizens have transitioned to high school. Indeed, most developed countries like America, Asia, and Europe have attained even higher transition rates to secondary school annually. In the United States of America, adolescents struggle to navigate the critical transition years from ten to eighteen years with relatively low success (WHO, 2013). Despite the availability of good schools, supportive family systems, and caring community institutions, one-quarter of students in high school in the US do not grow up to meet the moral requirements of society because they fail to transition smoothly from childhood to adolescence (WHO, 2013). For others, the obstacles they usually face as they navigate various developmental challenges tend to impair their physical and emotional health, destroying their motivation and hindering their ambitions (Sanders et al., 2015). Owing to unsolved developmental challenges, some easily yield to social pressures, ending up engaging in drug abuse and antisocial behaviour at an early age. (WHO, 2013).

In Australia, more than 42% of students face difficulties transitioning from childhood to adolescence (LinNielsen et al., 2017). As a result, most mental, social and psychological disorders are recorded at the stage between 14 and 18 years as adolescents join high school and while progressing with their education in high schools (Lester & Cross, 2015). These transitional challenges are typically linked to poor social, health, and educational results. The government is working to address this issue, but it remains a social and public health concern (WHO, 2013). Furthermore, these teenage social and emotional challenges typically raise the chance of later-life psychotic disorders, melancholy, anxiety, and substance abuse (LinNielsen et al., 2017). While a small percentage of Australian students manage well with the opportunities and challenges that await them in high school (Lester and Cross 2015), others view it as a stressful and anxious period leading to the development of social and emotional competencies that are necessary for a smooth transition into a new social hierarchy (Lawrence et al., 2015).

In Germany, the commencement of adolescence represents a particularly vulnerable period to susceptibility to various behavioral problems, which are usually attributed by many researchers to difficulties in transitioning from childhood to adolescence (Jorg et al., 2017). The necessary transition from childhood-centered mental, social and emotional functioning to adult-oriented developmental tasks represents an additional challenge (Hanewald, 2013). Hence, during this period, more than 38% of high school students face transitioning difficulties, which usually manifest in the adoption of maladaptive practices (Jorg et al., 2017).

In Africa, the reviewed literature shows that countries such as Kenya and Zimbabwe have attained high transitional rates despite hard economic conditions due to free secondary education and the one hundred per cent transition policy (Kibet, 2017). The concern, however, is that while many pupils join secondary school, the majority experience conflicting feelings, anxiety and stress (WHO, 2017). According to Burns (2013) most African countries rely on students' transition for their economic development. However, according to a report by the World Bank, students' transition from primary to junior secondary is affected by high rates of dropout cases (World Bank, 2008). In Nigeria, for example, Galton and McLellan (2017) found that if students' expectations are not met after transitioning to a new environment, they are likely to be frustrated. Other reviewed literature reveals that even with a 100 per cent transition, only 4% of children proceed to higher learning institutions in different African countries (Allen et al., 2013).

In Kenya, the Ministry of Education has facilitated secondary schools to have a well-equipped and working counselling department to address behavior problems which result from transition challenges. This is because, according to Galton et al. (2017), where there is good discipline, there is improved academic performance. This is meant to enable smooth developmental and educational transition. However, according to the National Plan of Action for Children (2015), cases of pre-adolescents and adolescents conflicting with the law between 2008 and 2018 have increased considerably. A further report by the United Nations Drug Control Program shows that 30% of secondary school students abuse drugs and other illegal substances, which may indicate a manifestation of difficulties in the transition into adolescence stage (Ondieki, 2018).

In this regard, any society should strive to support and enable adolescents in a way that fosters positive and healthy social lifestyles and standards, which leads to a smooth transition from childhood to adolescence (Dray et al., 2014). As a result, it is evident that this stage of human development is a transitional period that is crucial to a person's life and that their path deserves careful consideration. This is due to data from numerous domestic and international studies, which demonstrate that several factors affect students' capacity for a seamless transition. These include the individual's maturity level, capacity to obtain coping mechanisms, the characteristics of the new learning environment, and the degree of social support and preparation offered both before and after the change (Mwikali, 2013). Competence is viewed as a Psychological need individuals possess. However, what needs to be clearly understood is the extent and degree to which the various competence influence or hinder a smooth transition from childhood to adolescence, a critical area that the present study sought to explore.

It is at this backdrop that research sought to examine the predictive role of competence need satisfaction on students' transition in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the world all over, students' transition to secondary school has become of great concern to many researchers. Many schools and especially in Kisii County have experienced challenges related to students' transition. As a result, most schools in Kisii County have experienced levels of indiscipline, high levels of school dropout, chronic absenteeism, poor academic performance, and general educational wastage. These problems are associated with poor transition. The large number of dropout and absenteeism cases at different times of the year has impacted heavily on academic performance subsequently affected economic growth of the country. Despite the government of Kenya investing heavily on education through education for all (EFA) transition problems are on the rise. Indeed for the last four years Kisii County has had transition related problems. This called for intervention to find out factors that predict poor transition. The central concern of this study was to determine whether perceived competence Psychological need satisfaction predict transition among secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

Purpose of the study

The study aimed to examine the predictive effect of students' competence need satisfaction on transition in public schools in Kisii County.

Objectives of the study

Determine the relationship between students' need for competence satisfaction and transition among secondary school students.

Hypothesis of the study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between students' competence and transition.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a correlational research design aimed at examining the relationship between students' competence need satisfaction and transition among secondary school students. The statistical test used was Pearson r correlated coefficient

Research Instruments

The research utilized the Psychological needs Satisfaction scale (PNS) questionnaire to measure competence and modified items from Deci and Ryan Transition scale to determine predictive role of students' competence need satisfaction on transition in secondary school.

The PNS questionnaire consisted of three parts to examine respondents' levels of autonomy, competence and relatedness needs satisfaction. The transition modified items examined students' transition as shown in Appendix B. Items that tested students' competence satisfaction were adapted from the main questionnaire. Items were scored on a 5 –point likert scale ranging from agreeing strongly to strongly disagreeing.

Pre-testing of research instruments

A pilot study was carried out to evaluate content validity and reliability of research instruments. Pilot study was done on 20 schools which were not part of the study though they represented categories designated for the study. 80 Students were used for pre- testing.

Reliability coefficient of students' need satisfaction was 0.88. Validity was established by use of experts to evaluate content and construct validity of the instruments.

Sampling Techniques and Sample size Determination

The study used simple random sampling, stratified sampling purposeful sampling and proportionate sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select the participants, stratified sampling was used to select schools strata, purposeful sampling was used to select sub-counties and proportionate sampling was use to ensure proportionate number of participants within a stratum.

Table 1 Sampling Frame

Type of School	Population			Sample size		
	Schools	Students		School	Students	
	No.	Boys	Girls	No	Boys	Girls
Boys Boarding	7	1655	0	3	56	0

Girls Boarding	8	0	1387	3	0	47
Co-educational boarding	5	689	311	2	24	10
Co-education Day	107	4667	2823	9	159	96
Mixed Day /Boarding	6	506	372	2	17	13
Girls Boarding/Boys Day	2	23	29	1	1	1
Total	135	7540	4922	20	257	167

Table.1 shows that 135 secondary schools with a student population of 12,462 were distributed in six categories of schools. 20 schools were selected to provide study participants. Out of the total population, 424 students were selected to participate in the study, representing about 3.4% of the total student population

Data collection procedures

Participants responded to questionnaires on their levels of competence need satisfaction. Ten items were filled as:

I am free to do assignment given to me in my own way

I complete classwork given to me in time

I am capable of organizing my personal private reading

Data was coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social sciences (SPSS) version 2.6

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Participants' transition was categorized into three levels. These were low, moderate, and high levels of perceived need for transition. The results were presented using a line graph, which is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Figure 1 on levels of participants' perceived Transition

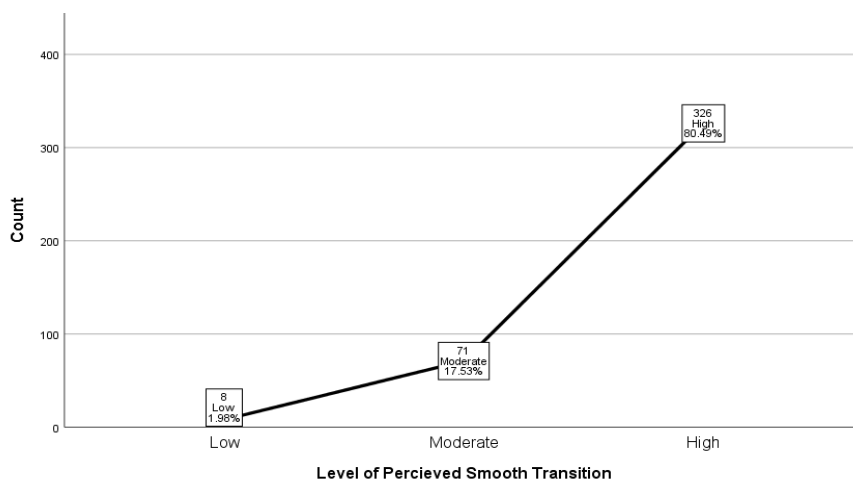


Figure 1 reveals that 80.49% (326) of participants had a high level of perceived smooth transition, 17.53% (71) had a moderate level, and the fewest participants, 1.96% (8), were categorized as having a low level of perceived transition. This indicates that most participants felt that they were able to transition smoothly either because they had high resilience or because they were assisted in handling challenges they faced related to the transition to secondary school.

Levels of participants' competence was also measured as shown in figure 2

Figure 2. showing Levels of Participants' Need for Competence

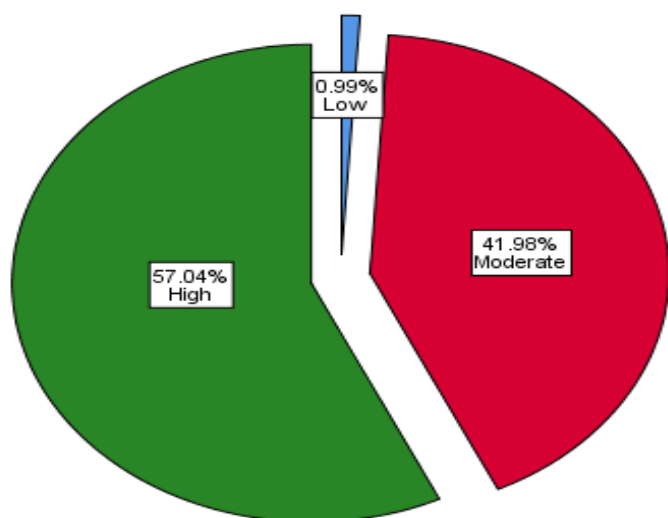


Figure 4.3 reveals that the majority of the participants, representing 57.04% of the respondents, had a high need for competence, 41.98 % had a moderate level need for competence, and 0.99% had a low need for competence.

For further insight, analysis was done by tabulating participants' mean scores across perceived Smooth Transition, as revealed in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Need for Competence Mean scores across levels Perceived Smooth Transition

Level of Perceived Smooth Transition		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	Need for Competence Scores	8	23	49	36.25	8.17
Moderate	Need for Competence Scores	71	22	48	35.97	4.45
High	Need for Competence Scores	326	21	50	37.50	5.70

Results in Table 4.11 show that respondents classified as having a high level of perceived smooth transition had the highest need for competence mean score ($M = 37.50$, $SD = 5.70$), followed by the respondents with a moderate level of perceived smooth transition ($M = 35.97$, $SD = 4.47$). Respondents with low levels of perceived smooth transition had the lowest need for competence mean score ($M = 36.25$, $SD = 8.17$). The possible reason for the findings would be that there seems to be a relationship between an individual's level of competence and transition to the next grade, and this supports the current education policy, which advocates competency-based performance.

Testing hypothesis

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between students' competence and transition. To test this hypothesis, the Pearson r correlation coefficient was used, and the results are summarized in Table 3

Table 3. Pearson r for participants' Perceived Smooth Transition and Need for Competence

		Perceived Smooth Transition Score	Need for Competence Score
Perceived Smooth Transition Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.22**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
	N	405	405
Need for Competence Score	Pearson Correlation	.22**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	
	N	405	405
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Results in Table 3 showed that there is a significant positive relationship between respondents' competence and transition. ($r(403) = 0.22, p < .05$). Results indicate that participants with high perceived smooth transition scores had a high need for competence scores. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings could be attributed to the fact that competent students tend to progress with ease in their education than incompetent ones. These results are in agreement with another study by Evans et al. (2018), who found that lower levels of achievement greatly hindered transition among learners. Competency can be seen in terms of academic scores as well as other multiple adjustments while a student is in school. Further findings by Shaik (2012) indicated that adolescents need to be competent in various aspects for them to transition smoothly into secondary school. Students who find challenges incompetent have been found to develop a general loss of academic interest. Henry et al. termed these as negative consequences. Most significantly, students' transition by the time they join high school coincides with the onset of puberty and adolescence, which are likely to trigger stress among students (Bolman et al., 2019). This is worsened by increased academic responsibility (Rens et al., 2018) and social and emotional spheres. It is then necessary that for the students to transition smoothly, they need to develop competency to deal with challenges associated with developmental changes, too.

Some of the competence challenges that impact heavily on students' transition include social exclusion, discrimination, depression, anxiety, education difficulties, and behavioral disorders among 15-19-year-olds (WHO, 2021).

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Competence is defined as students' ability to perform in a successful and effective manner while maintaining their desire to study (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Regression and correlation studies confirm that there is a high and strong correlation between students' competence needs and transition in secondary school.

The results of this study are consistent with those of Nadia et al. (2024) in their study on why students feel competent in the classroom. Using 25 high school students, they concluded that, apart from autonomy, the quality of teaching and students' own skills and attitudes contributed to academic achievement.

This study further agrees with an earlier study by Adeyemo (2010), which found that students' competence had a strong and significant relationship with problem-solving tasks. Similar results were found by Amalu and Bekomson (2024), who ascertained that competence need satisfaction was similar to mastery of content and the ability to control outcomes among students.

A more recent study by Oundo and Nyaga (2014), among third-year and fourth-year students in private and public universities, concluded that there was a strong relationship between students' academic competence and

the guidance and counselling services that students received. This was more evident with students in private universities. This informs the need for students to acquire certain competence skills irrespective of their level of education. The findings by the two researchers agree with the current study findings in that they all agree that academic competence is key to transition. However, the present study concentrated more on secondary schools.

Oostdam et al. (2019) contend that although teachers are important in meeting students' essential psychological needs, competence, autonomy, and relatedness are not the only important players in the educational setting. Students are in the company of and engage with other students most of the time in school. Students' perceptions of their own competence, autonomy, and relatedness can also be greatly influenced by their peers. The present study agrees with the above researchers since the role played by peers and teachers proved to be important in determining transition.

Furthermore, the results of the current study appear to be consistent with a longitudinal study conducted in New Zealand by Wylie and Hodgen (2011), which examined young people's competency starting in early childhood schooling at ages 5, 6, 8, 9, 14, and 16 and continuing through high school. According to the results, students with poorer scores had taken two or more terms before changing schools. This indicates that the current findings and the earlier ones are consistent.

An earlier study by Malaspina and Rimm (2008) in England among pupils from kindergarten to grade seven revealed that academically and socially competent students adjusted faster than their counterparts. Using a population of 265 students, the study concluded that students' academic and social abilities improved at transitional points. This implies that for students to be able to transition smoothly, some level of competence is required.

The two longitudinal studies took several years to reach their final findings. Importantly, the current study agrees that competence needs highly determines transition. Although the previous findings were restricted to pupils from grade one to grade seven, the present study goes further and includes students in secondary schools, so the results can be applied in wider settings.

A study by Adeyemo (2010) revealed that students' ability is congruent with performance and that students with higher levels of competence prefer working in isolation and keeping social distance. Based on these findings, teachers should endeavor to encourage students to explore various individual competencies.

The extent to which students feel competent in the classroom and at school was a factor in predicting their transition (Nadia et al., 2022). This comes after researchers found that perceived competence among students at higher levels of learning predicted their transition. These results strongly support the findings of the present study

The findings of this study also support similar findings by Ndung'u, Mwangi, and Ireri (2024) on social competence as a correlate of school adjustment. Results indicated a high correlation between boys and girls being more successful. This infers that teachers should assist students in developing academic and social competencies necessary for transition. However, the study did not agree with Wacera et al (2018), who conducted a study to establish a relationship between perceived competence and academic achievement and found an inverse report of the present study. Conclusively, there seems to be high consistency between the previous and current studies since competence was found to strongly determine transition among students.

CONCLUSION

The need for competence satisfaction was hypothesized as high, moderate, or low. Results from descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression indicated that irrespective of gender or age; competence needs satisfaction highly determined students' transition in Kisii County. Results further showed that students with low levels of competence had low levels of perceived transition. There was a significant relationship between gender and competence needs satisfaction in favor of boys. These findings did not support the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant relationship between students' competence and transition.

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