

## **SELECTED FACTORS INFLUENCING SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF EGERTON UNIVERSITY; NJORO CAMPUS**

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### **Abstract**

*The provision of education and training to all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the Government's overall development strategy. A successful adjustment of students to University environment enables them to complete their studies on time. However, students' failure to adjust to the University environment is still a persistent problem facing education in Kenya. The underlying factors that influence students' social and academic adjustment at the University have not received adequate research. These factors may influence students' behaviour which determines the adjustment at the University. This study sought to investigate the influence of selected factors on students' social and academic adjustment at the University. The study adopted ex post facto's Causal-comparative research design. The target population was 4831 undergraduate students enrolled at Egerton University and three staff from the Dean of students' office. A random sample of 357 students and purposive sample of - 40 Student peer counsellors, 2 Student counsellors and the Dean of Students was selected. Data was collected using closed and open ended University Students' Questionnaire (USQ) and interview schedule conducted among selected respondents. The collected data was processed and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means and percentages) and inferential statistics (Chi square, Pearson Correlation and ANOVA). The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 15.0 for windows was used to aid in the data analysis. All tests were done at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance. The findings of the study indicated that interpersonal relationships and the attitude of students towards university environment and academic programme were critical factors influencing social adjustment and academic adjustment of undergraduate students in the university. Both male and female students were exposed to the same environment that influenced their similar social and academic adjustment in the university. First year students have a higher level of academic adjustment compared to other students in the university. Guidance and counselling programme has a critical role to play in assisting students to adjust in the university. The study recommends that there is need for the university to encourage social activities that can facilitate effective interpersonal relationships among students. There is need for the university to increase the level of publicity of guidance and counselling services programme and its services in the universities so as to assist students un coping and adjusting to university life.*

### **Area of the Study**

Students' failure to adjust to the university environment is common in public universities in Kenya. The statistics from the Deans of students' department show that, there is an alarming rate of student drop-outs, course deferment, and delay in graduation, drug and substance abuse among the students at Egerton University. In an effort to address the aforementioned challenges. Egerton University has put in place some measures including: comprehensive orientation of new students, establishment of academic advisory programme, counselling services, health services among other programmes. Despite these measures, students' maladjustment is still common in the university. Chepcheng (2004), recommends that a systematic study examining campus, effects on students social and academic adjustment as they progress from first to final year of study needs to be conducted. There was need to investigate the influence of selected factors on students' social and academic adjustment at the University.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the problems arising from social and academic adjustment of undergraduate students in Egerton University, Njoro Campus.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were:

- (i) To determine the influence of socio-economic factors, interpersonal relationship skills, students' attitude towards university environment and academic programme on social and academic adjustment of undergraduate students at the university.
- (ii) To investigate whether there is any gender differences in social and academic adjustment among, the undergraduate students at the university.
- (iii) To determine whether the year of study influence social and academic adjustment among the undergraduate students at the university.
- (iv) To examine the role of guidance and counselling in undergraduate students academic and social adjustment at the university.

### ***Research Hypotheses of the Study***

The following null hypotheses were tested for their validity:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no statistically significant influence of socio-economic factors, interpersonal relationship skills, students' attitude towards university environment and academic programme on students' social and academic adjustment at the university:

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no statistically significant gender difference in social and academic adjustment among undergraduate students at the university.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in social and academic adjustment among University students according to the year of study of the students.

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

This study is significant because the findings from the study may assist the Government to minimize wastage on human resources and properties in the institutions. The universities stand to benefit from the outcome of the study in that, the indiscipline cases caused by maladjusted students will be minimized. The findings from the study may assist the parents who invest heavily in education in that, their resources are not wasted when the students are well adjusted at the University. It is of essence to mention that, the students will enormously benefit from this study by understanding the determinants of their levels of social and academic adjustment. Hence the students may be able to do well in academics and emerge as well adjusted citizens and personnel for job markets.

### ***Scope of the Study***

This study was carried out at Egerton University, Njoro Campus. The study was strictly confined to selected factors which include socio-economic factors, interpersonal relationship skills and students' attitude towards university life and how they influence social academic adjustment of undergraduate students at the university. The study targeted students in their first to final year of study at Egerton University Njoro Campus particularly those admitted by the Joint Admission Board (JAB). This is a group of students who have left high school to join the university and facing a lot of social and academic challenges. They are considered as the appropriate respondents for the study because adjustment is a continuous process.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

The following factors posed as limitations:

- (i) Since this study was confined to one university, the findings from this research study may only be generalized to Universities of similar characteristics in Kenya.
- (ii) Respondents may give socially acceptable responses.
- (iii) Due to the research design used in the study, the researcher was not able to manipulate the independent variables in order to establish a convincing influence of selected factors on social and academic adjustment students at the University.

### ***Assumptions of the study***

The study was conducted under the following assumptions:

- (i) Information provided by the respondents in their respective questionnaires were genuine indicators of factors influencing social and academic adjustment of undergraduate students.
- (ii) Social and academic aspects are interrelated and determine students' adjustment to university environment.
- (iii) Students find it challenging to adjust socially and academically to the University environment.

- (iv) Other factors not studied were assumed not to affect the study.

### ***Physical, Academic and Social Environment of Egerton University***

Egerton University started as an agricultural school in 1939. In fact in 1955, the school became a college through the Egerton College Ordinance. The University was elevated to a constituent college of the University of Nairobi, and in 1987 it became a full-fledged university by the Act of Parliament (Students' Handbook, 2006/2007). Egerton University Njoro Campus is the main Campus, situated on prime agricultural land with excellent climate ideal for academic atmosphere. The Campus has diverse student body drawn from a wide range of interest and experiences. The university has diversified its programmes to include the Education, Natural Sciences, Engineering, Art and Social Sciences, which form the eight Faculties. The institution has established Academic Advisory Programme. Every student registered with the university, is assigned to a member of the Faculty who serves as the academic advisor, throughout the students course of study. The advisory system provides for a situation that enables each student to have a specific Faculty staff member within the university to provide guidance and advice on academic matters (Sindabi, 2007). In case the academic advisor evaluates a students' problem as beyond his/her ability to solve, the student is advised to seek help from the counselling centre. The university Counselling Centre handles personal, social and psychological problems which might interfere with the students' academic performance and general adjustment to university campus life.

The major purpose of the Academic Advising Programme in the university is to assist the students to develop meaningful -educational and career goals. The university goals for academic advising programme include; development of suitable educational plans clarification of career and life goals and selection of appropriate courses. Apart from the academic and research endeavours. services such as counselling, HIV and AIDs awareness, international students' services and spiritual guidance are offered. The services enhance students' welfare. The university adheres to the ethical conduct in academic, social and spiritual in order to assist students meet national and individual goals. Egerton University like all public universities in Kenya has a council which is a governing body of the university. The council provides for the welfare of staff and students in the institution. Further more the council consults with the senate and may make regulations governing conduct and discipline of the students in the university. The core enterprise at the university for students is academic. However, students undergo other significant and critical developmental and growth processes which require a campus environment that fosters and enhances these processes. Njoro campus provides an environment for free interaction of religious groups comprising Protestants, Catholics, SDA and Muslims. The university chaplaincy serves as a resource and referral centre for students who wish to explore their own spiritual counselling needs. The chaplaincy also organises, coordinates and offers spiritual and counselling services in the university. Health services are crucial for students and are offered in the university. The health unit maintains a healthy environment through offering curative, preventive and rehabilitative health services to students.

### ***Adjustment***

The term adjustment is often used as a synonym for accommodation and adaptation. Strictly speaking, the term denotes the results of equilibrium, which may be affected by either of these processes (Monroe, 1990). It is used to emphasize the individual's struggle to along or survive in his or her social and physical environment. Good (1959) states that adjustment is the process of finding and adopting modes of behaviour suitable to the environment or the changes in the environment. Shafer (1961) emphasized that adjustment is the process by which a living organism maintains a balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. Kulshrestha (1979) explained that the adjustment process is a way in which the Individual attempts to deal with stress, tensions, conflict e.t.c and meet his or her needs. In, this process, the individual also makes efforts to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment. In adjustment, the two crucial factors are the individual and the environment. Arkoff (1968) further defined college or university adjustment in terms of college achievement which covered students' academic achievement and personal growth. College adjustment to university is multifaceted that involve an array of demands varying in kind and degree which requires a variety of coping responses or adjustments. Baker and Siryk (1999), observes that there are two main aspects of adjustment to college or university including academic adjustment and social adjustment.

### ***Social Adjustment of University Students***

Social adjustment is fundamental for everyone, but particularly important for undergraduate students engaged in the process of individualisation from their home.

Students' social adjustment to college and/or university has been linked to students' overall adjustment (Moore, et. al., 1998). One way of assisting students in establishing connections is to help them become involved in social activities at the university. Social adjustment can be examined in terms of how well students function in their immediate environment, participation in social activities and their satisfaction with various social aspects of the university experience (Campas, et. al, 1986). Social adjustment may be just as important as academic adjustment. Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) observed that, personal adjustment and integration into social fabric of university environment play a role and is as important as academic factors throughout the students' life.

### ***Academic Adjustment of University Students***

Most acado et al., (2000), revealed that, academic demands increase and new social relations are established when students join higher level of institution. Students are often uncertain of their abilities to meet these demands. They need to be assisted to develop coping skills, that will enable them overcome the challenges they encounter at the university (Egerton University Student HandBook, 2006/2007). Academic adjustment (how well students deal with educational demands) includes; students motivation to complete academic work, success in meeting academic requirements, academic effort and satisfaction with academic environment (Baker & Siryk. 1989). The pursuit of academic goals is the primary purpose of being admitted to the university (Egerton University Student HandBook, 2008). Russell and Petrie (1992), in their study on academic adjustment of colleges and/or university student concluded that many students who succeed academically in high school do not show similar patterns of success in the university. Guidance and counselling services play a major role in assisting students to adjust adequately to university environment and to take heed to academic issues by developing time management skills for better performance (Students Handbook, 2008). Wilson (1969), observed that, personal adjustment is related to academic achievement. Thus a positive correlation exists between academic performance and students' adjustment to university life.

### ***Gender and Students' Social and Academic Adjustment***

Cook (1995) posits that female students often have more difficult time adjusting to the colleges and/or university environment. This could be due to the difference in their developmental process. Female students tend to rely on relation and socialization experiences to aid in adjusting to college and/or university more than their male counter parts. Arthur (1998), asserts that the way in which male and female students cope with stress and depression differs. He further remarked that, males tend to suppress stress via isolation and escape while female tends to engage in self-blame. This difficulty in adjustment for female students may also be due to the lack of social connections in the environment. The degree to which a woman is able to adjust may be directly linked to her level of confidence and general self esteem. Protinsky et. al, (1996) assert that, female students who perceive themselves as having a high sense of personal authority would also fare better in perceived college and/or university adjustment. Since numerous studies have indicated that female students face unique problems and have more difficulties in adjusting to university environment than their counterparts, it is of great importance to assist these students in order to cope with life challenges at the university.

### ***Interpersonal Relationship Skills and Social and Academic Adjustment***

The structure and meaning of interpersonal behaviour has been an important component in a social set up. Interpersonal relationship forms the core of human daily activity. Hoimbeck and Leake (1999), assert that, individuals who are able to succeed handling their independence and newfound freedoms are able to make new relationship while maintaining old relationships. Studies have shown that living arrangement have impacted the social adjustment of colleges and/or university students. Adams et al. (2000), remarked that, the environment in which students live has had a direct impact on the student's overall adjustment. Students who lived in environment that are conducive to learning and provided ample study space and opportunities for growth and interaction tend to have an easier time adjusting than students who live in other environment (Dinger, 1999). Residence hall climates have been associated with families in terms of rules boundaries and atmosphere of care and concern for other members. Students are expected to develop care and concern to other in the residential halls. The social climate has also been deemed important is assisting students to adjustment at the university. The university students belong to the category between late adolescence and early adulthood. This stage of life is characterized by periods of instability considerable conflicts, anxiety and tension (Hall. 1904). Socially, adolescence is period of building a stable identity, many young people experience role confusion and blurred self image. Student may need to be assisted to develop skills of solving these difficulties and uncertainties. One way of assisting students to develop the interactive skills may be through timely and adequate orientation.

Moser (1963), posits that new students should be assisted to adjust to the new environment. He asserts that orientation of new students should be done in conjunction with continuing students. Interpersonal relationship has an effect on students self esteem which indeed affects the students overall adjustment at the university.

### ***Socio-Economic Factors and Students' Social and Academic Adjustment***

Students that join the university come from diverse social backgrounds. Their Socioeconomic status is varied in terms of family income, parental level of education and the nature of occupation. According to the Vice Chancellor's Committee Report (2000), the social 'clusters' based on socio-economic 'status of the students create frustration' among student as they compare and even ridicule each on this basis. The students from low-social-economic status tend to isolate from those higher social-economic status thus affecting their overall adjustment to university environment. The report further reveals that, the HELB money available to the students is inadequate which in turn interfere with their social and academic adjustment at the university. Consequently, majority of students spend the money given to them on luxuries only to find later that they cannot feed themselves. Students need to be guided and counselled. in order to cope with the resources which are limited and assisted to budget well during their stay at the university.

### ***Students Attitude towards University Environment***

Human beings throughout their lifespan are exposed to a number of experiences as they interact with other people and the environment in which they live. As a result they may develop attitude about others or the environment. Bogardus (1931), defines attitude as a tendency to act towards or against something in the environment which becomes thereby a positive or negative value. Attitude greatly influence how one behaves, therefore are among the issues that may be responsible for peoples action in different situations. Attitudes are important aspects of social function since they summarize past experiences and predict or direct future actions. Ratcliff (1991), posits that, students attitudes about entry to university values sense of purpose and sense of independence have a direct influence on academic achievement. The students' perception to university environment has a great influence on social and academic adjustment at the university. Hogg and Vaughan (1995), purport that, the learning of attitudes is an integral part of socialization process, which may occur through direct experiences and/or interaction with others or as a product of the cognitive process. Thus attitude formed by students eventually influence both their social and academic adjustment at the university. When students attitude towards university environment, they tend to adjust socially which is reflected in their academic performance.

### ***Role of Counselling Services and Students' Social and Academic Adjustment***

Guidance is a process that consists of a group of service offered to individual to assist them in securing the knowledge and skills needed in making adequate choices, plans and interpretation essential to satisfactory adjustment in diverse areas (Sindabi, 1991). The services are therefore designed to result in efficiency which requires the individual to make adjustments in order to be an effective member of the society. Counselling is a process that helps an individual analyse him/herself by relating his capabilities, achievements, interests and mode of adjustment to new decision made. Infact Makinde 1984, remarked that, guidance and counselling services are essential in secondary schools, colleges and universities where most of the adolescents congregate. Therefore, guidance and counselling programme in higher institution of learning addresses the needs of the students so as to enhance their adjustment to the immediate environmental challenges that affect their social growth and academic performance.

According to Rogers (1961), counselling is a series of direct contact with individual which aims to offer assistance in changing attitude and behaviour. Rogers further observed that. effective counselling consist of a definitely structured, permissive relationship which allows the student to gain an understanding to a degree which enables him take positive steps in the light of new orientation. Infact the fundamental goals in counselling services are essential in increasing the students feeling of personal adjustment and effective interaction in their immediate environment. The counselling services offered to the students in counselling centre in the university enables the student develop a positive attitude towards social and academic aspects in their new environment. Guidance and counselling also provides services to students where career placement has been mismatched, orientation of new students, social relations, institution adaptability and study skills among other activities. The Counselling Centre at Egerton University is under the Students' Affairs Department and has professional primary mission of counselling is to assist students in the development of skills for establishing and maintaining effective satisfying personal and social relationships. in the formulation and implementation of educational and career plans, also facilitate students' self-understanding and acceptance

The staff in counselling centre assists students to cope with crises and to learn how to resolve challenges. Infact the students' counsellors assist students to restore wholeness in strained relationships with those who constitute their social environment. They also guide students in decision making, clarify alternatives for students and nurture students' growth. Another essential counselling body is the peer counsellors which comprises a group of students recruited and trained by Egerton university to assist their peers. The peer counsellors acquire skills from the training and experience which is highly sensitised to the needs of students within campus and can respond appropriately. Among the wide range of issues the peer counsellors trained in are; counselling skills, leadership skills, academic problems, relationship concerns, substance abuse and alcoholic counselling, communication and interpersonal skills, finance, time, stress, and conflict management. Peer counsellors can also help students to adjust to the university environment student counsellors who provide counselling and spiritual services to students.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

Adjustment as a process involves the variation of an individual behaviour for more harmonious functioning in a changed circumstance. Behaviour is learned through interaction with others in an environment and can be explained through various theories. According to Jones (1989), the fact that behaviour varies from situation to situation, may not necessarily mean that it is controlled by situations but rather the person construing the situation differently. Jones further explains that the same set of stimuli may provoke different response from different people or the same person at a particular time. Thus people adjust to fit into the dynamic conditions in the environment. The interaction between the person and the environment involves human beliefs and cognitive competencies that are developed and modified by social influences and structures within the environment. Hence, the framework of this study is provided by the behaviouristic approach to behaviour modification. Therefore, this study is mainly conceived within the social learning theory, classical conditioning as advocated by Pavlov, and B.F Skinner's theory of learning. The theories describe and explain the student's adjustment and the interactions with the selected factors at the University environment.

### ***Social Learning Theory***

The social learning theory argues that, the behaviour of an individual or a group acts as stimulus for similar thoughts, attitude and behaviour on the parts of the observers. Bandura (1986) asserts that people learn by observing the behaviour of others and that some serve as models that are capable of eliciting behaviour change in certain individuals. The theory is useful in that it addresses the key issues of behaviour acquisition and mode of adjustment relevant for students during their stay at the University. Thus, behaviour is not solely by inner drives or environments, but as a result of an interactive association between inner process and environmental variables. Therefore, behaviour in this theory is learned through observation and imitation. This is what Corey (1991), refers to integrating new patterns of behaviour based on watching model (s) which include the learning of social and other learning skills. The change in attitudes through observation may directly cause psychological, social and academic adjustment among the students at the University. Bandura believes that, the vast majority of the habits acquired in lifetime are learnt by observing and imitating other people.

### ***Classical Conditioning Theory (Ivan Pavlovs' Theory)***

Apart from social learning theory, this study will also embrace the contribution of classical conditioning theory. Pavlovian theory (1849-1936), provides a fluid approach to the description of repeated and systematic association between the students adjustment (conditioned stimuli) and the selected factors (unconditioned stimulus). The association is therefore assumed to produce a response (adjustment) towards the university environment. The transitional process from high school to university puts the student in a totally new Environment. In the university teaching- learning process changes, rules and regulations vary. Time management, accommodation and catering services expose the student to a more independent life contrary to high school life. This implies that, the students encounter social and academic challenges that require the development of life skills in order to overcome and cope with. Watson (1878-1958), concurred with Pavlovs' ideas on conditioned responses. Therefore, students' adjustment is a continuous process that leads to a change in behaviour which becomes conditioned when reinforced. Hence, students learn and develop new behaviour through conditioning process at the university environment.

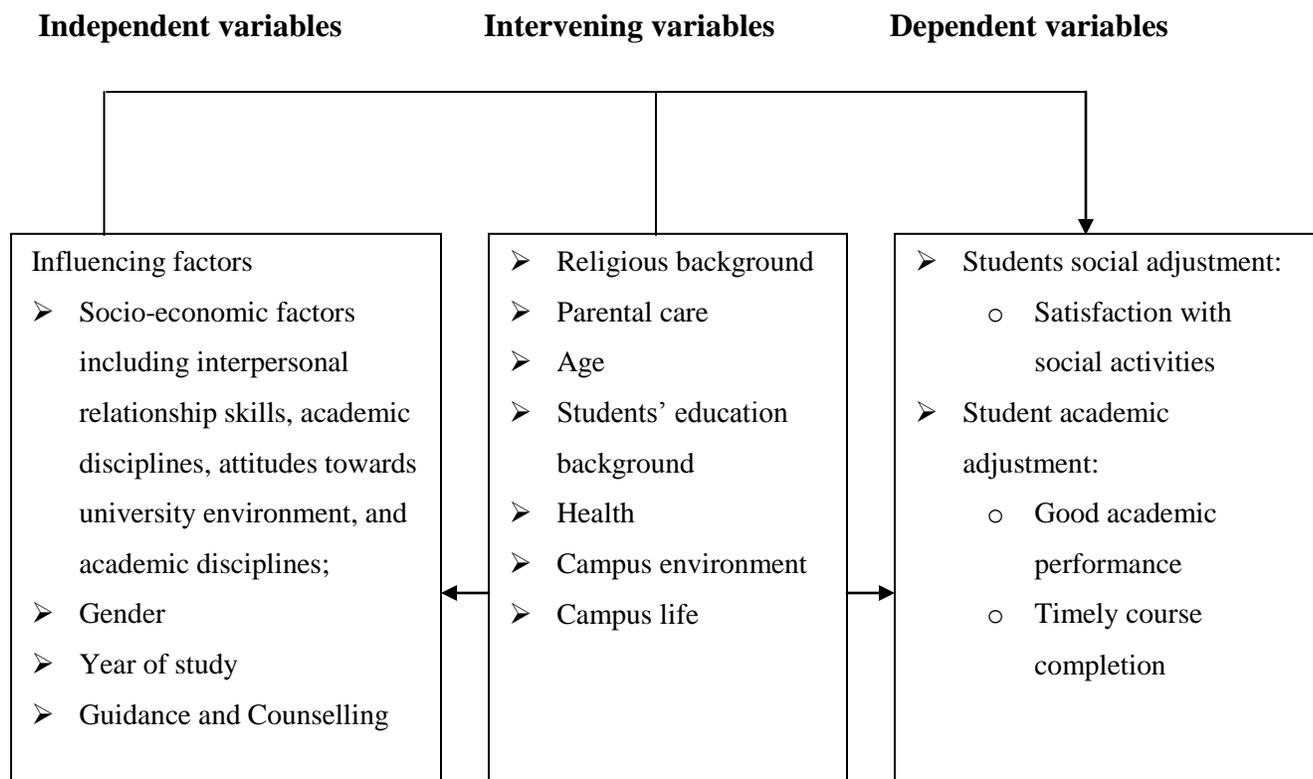
### ***Operant Conditioning Theory (B. F Skinner's Theory)***

Another theory considered relevant to the study is the Skinner's theory. This theory holds that, behaviour is greatly influenced by environmental factors rather than individuals' internal factors.

University environment influences students’ behaviour hence adjustment becomes a crucial issue in this study. The key assumption of Skinner’s theory view is that, an individual produces a large variety of behaviours and if repeated (reinforced) are used again. According to Skinner, students’ behaviour is controlled by its outcome. The interaction between the students and the selected factors in the university environment determines the acquired behaviour. The selected factors in the university environment acts as a stimulus which influences students’ social and academic behaviour hence adjustment (response) is developed. The variables considered include socio-economic factors, student’s attitudes gender, interpersonal relationship skills and year of study.

**Conceptual Framework**

In this study, the influencing factors were the independent variables and the dependent variable was students’ social and academic adjustment. The influencing factors were - measured using descriptive and inferential statistics and ANOVA. These factors were expected to influence social and academic adjustment of the undergraduate students at the University. The dependent variable was measured by studying the frequency and means. The intervening variables were held constant. From the title, objectives and theoretical framework, the study has been conceptualized in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Determinants of Social and Academic Adjustment of Students in the University**

The model in Figure 1 indicates that when students interact with the selected factors, a behaviour change is developed which in turn leads to adjustment. However the intervening variables are assumed not to interfere with the independent and dependent variables.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

This study adopted ex post facto Causal- comparative research design. This research design is a systematic empirical inquiry in which a researcher has no ability to control the independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred and therefore can not be manipulated by the researcher (Kerlinger, 2000). The design was found appropriate because it allowed the researcher to investigate the possibility of causal relationship between variables which in this study constituted the selected factors as the independent variables and the students’ social and academic adjustment as the dependent variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). The design is particularly suitable in social, educational and psychological contexts where independent variables lie outside the researchers’ control.

In this study, the factors influencing students' social and academic adjustment has already been established in universities and therefore cannot be manipulated. A comparison on social and academic adjustment of students was done on gender and year of study.

### **Location of the Study**

The study was conducted at Egerton University Njoro Campus in Njoro district, in Rift Valley province of Kenya. Njoro is preferred because it is not only the main campus of Egerton University, but it also has the largest number of students as opposed to other university campuses. In effect, the campus provided adequate student representation for the study. It was important to find out whether the selected factors have an influence on social and academic adjustment among the students at the university.

### **Population of the Study**

The population from which the sample was drawn consisted of undergraduate students enrolled at Egerton University Njoro campus who comprised those in their first to final year of study. In addition, students' peer counsellors, student counsellors, Dean of students in the institution, were involved in the study. The total population of undergraduate students at Egerton University is 4828 as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Distribution of Population by Year of Study**

Student population	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
First years students	1101	616	1717
Second year students	773	390	1163
Third year students	741	408	1149
Fourth year students	546	253	799
<b>Total</b>	<b>2161</b>	<b>1667</b>	<b>4828</b>

Sources: Njoro Campus Admissions office (2008)

### **Sampling Procedures and Sample size**

The desired sample was selected using the stratified random sampling to select the required sample of the students in each year of study. These were further stratified into male and female students. Proportionate sampling was used to include sufficient number of cases from each of the four years of study and for an equal representation of each. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select the students' peer counsellors, university student counsellors and the Dean of student affairs. The respondents were considered important because such individuals are the first ones in handling students' grievances. As indicated in Table 1, the total population of undergraduate students enrolled in Egerton university was four thousand eight hundred and twenty eight 4828. To select the desired sample size from the total population, a table by Kathuri and Pals (1993) was adopted. According to the table, the sample size was three hundred and fifty seven (357). The number of members from each stratum was arrived at as follows:

$$n_i = \frac{N_i}{N} * n$$

Where,

$n_i$  = Number of members in the sample from strata  $i$  for  $i = 1, 2, 3, 4$ .

$N_i$  = Number of members in the population from strata  $i$  for  $i = 1, 2, 3, 4$ .

$N$  = Number of members in the entire population

$n$  = Sample size

**Table 3 Proportionate Sample by Year of Study**

Year of study	Population	Sample
First years students	1717	127
Second year students	1163	86
Third year students	1149	85
Fourth year students	799	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>4828</b>	<b>357</b>

Sources: Njoro Campus Admissions office (2008)

In addition, thirty nine (39) Students peer counsellors, Two (2) University student counsellors, and one (1) Dean of students from Egerton university was included in the sample. Therefore, the total population of the respondents for this study was three hundred and ninety nine (399).

### ***Instrumentation***

According to Kathuri and Pals (1993), most techniques for measuring social and psychology environment rely on verbal material in the form of questionnaires and interviews. To examine the research objectives, hypotheses and related literature, the researcher developed two data collection instruments, which comprised a questionnaire (both closed and open ended questions.), and an interview schedule for the Dean of students, student counsellors and the students' peer counsellors. The use of interview schedule supplements the questionnaire for quality data as it provides for probing. The questionnaire is also preferred because it is time saving and allowed collection of data from a larger sample of individuals as in the case of the study. Each instrument targeted specific information from the respondents. The students' questionnaires sought to obtain information on the influence of social economic factors, interpersonal relationship skills, academic discipline, students' attitudes towards the university environment, gender, year of study and role of guidance and counselling on students' social and academic adjustment at the university. The student peer counsellors', university student counsellors and the Dean of students' affairs' Interview schedule sought the information on the role of guidance and counselling and the overall social and academic adjustment of students at the university.

### ***Validity of the Instruments***

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it ought to measure (Corsin. 1987).The development of research instruments was done by examining the research objectives and hypotheses consulting research experts and lecturers, personal experience and related studies for the purposes of framing items and critical examination of variables. In this study both content and construct validity were used for the purposes of answering what the instrument really measure (Kathuri & Pals, 1993).

### ***Reliability of the Instruments***

Reliability refers to a measure of degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeat trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Before the questionnaire was used in the actual study, it was piloted in Laikipia Campus to determine its reliability and/or validity. This comprised a sample of hundred (100) students from Laikipia Campus having comparable characteristics with those in the actual study. Laikipia was considered relevant for this study for the purposes of obtaining an independent group of respondents who would not take part in the main study. A reliability' coefficient of 0.70 and above is considered acceptable (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).This figure is usually considered respectable and desirable for consistency levels (Hennerson et al., 1987). The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was computed in determining the internal consistency of the instruments. This method is considered more reliable compared to other methods since it is used in calculating the reliability of items that are not scored right versus wrong, as in some essay tests where more than one answer is possible (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

The researcher proceeded to the institution to collect data from the selected respondents after receiving permission from the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST). The researcher made appointment with Dean of students, and Student counsellors. On the agreed dates, the researcher visited the respective respondents and collected data using questionnaires and conducted interviews. The questionnaires were administered in person by the researcher with the help of research assistants to the respondents and were collected immediately after responding to them. The researcher explained the items which the students found it challenging to understand.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data collected was processed. coded and analysed to facilitate addressing research objectives and testing the null hypotheses. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. In objective one, chi square and Pearson correlation coefficient were used. Chi square was used in the significant influence of socio-economic factors and academic programme on social and academic adjustment. Pearson correlation was used in analyzing the relationship between interpersonal relationships skill and student attitude, and social and academic adjustment. In objective two, independent sample t-test was used in determining the significance difference in social and academic adjustment by the gender of the student. In objective three, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to find whether the year of study influenced on social and academic adjustment.

In addition, descriptive Statistics were used in all the objectives and enabled a meaningful description of scores with the use of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations used to analyse data. All tests were done at 0.05 level of significance. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 15.0 for windows was used in the data analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings on the influence of selected factors on social and academic adjustment of undergraduate students of Egerton University. Njoro Campus. The chapter is divided into various sections with each discussing and focusing on a specific objective. The first section of this chapter presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This was then followed by a discussion of the findings of the study based on the four specific objectives, including:

- (i) To determine the influence of socio-economic factors, interpersonal relationship skills, students' attitude towards university environment and academic programme on social and academic adjustment of undergraduate students at the university.
- (ii) To investigate whether there is any gender differences in social and academic adjustment among, the undergraduate students at the university.
- (iii) To determine whether the year of study influence social and academic adjustment among the undergraduate students at the university.
- (iv) To examine the role of guidance and counselling in undergraduate students academic and social adjustment at the university.

These specific objectives were operationalized by three null hypotheses. The data collected on each of the study objectives were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of a computer statistical programme known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5 for windows.

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents a brief description of the demographic characteristics of the sampled students involved in the study. Such a description is considered to be very important in providing a better understanding of the respondents included in the study and therefore provide a good foundation for a detailed discussion of the results based on the stipulated objectives of the study. The demographic characteristics included gender of the students and their year of study. The sampled 356 students included both male and female as summarized in Figure 2.

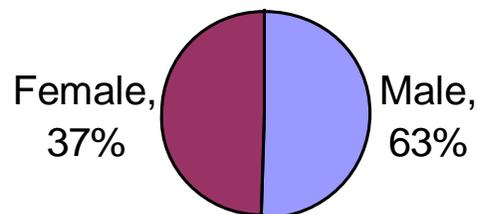


Figure 2: Gender Distribution of the Sampled Students

Figure 2 indicates that 63 percent (224) of the sampled students were males while 37 percent (132) were females. The gender disparities depicted the overall imbalance in the enrolment in the university with majority of the students being males compared to the female. In addition to gender, the 356 students were drawn from various years of undergraduate studies as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4 Year of Study of the Sampled Students

Year of study	Frequency	Percent
First	121	34.0
Second	66	18.5
Third	104	29.2
Fourth	62	17.4
Fifth	3	8
Total	356	100.0

Table 4 indicate that 34.0 percent of the students were drawn from first year, 18.5 percent from second year, 29.2 percent from third year, and 17.4 percent from fourth year and percent from fifth year. The variations in the number of students based on their years of study were attributed to the general variations in the enrolment in the university.

### ***Determinant of Social and Academic Adjustment of University Students***

The first objective sought to determine the influence of socio-economic factors interpersonal relationship skills, students' attitude towards university environment and academic programme on social and academic adjustment of undergraduate students at the university. The objective was premised on the fact that the level of students' social and academic adjustment depends on several interrelated factors at play either at the individual or university level. From literature review, various empirical studies had identified several factors which influence a student adjustment in a university. These factors were categorized into socioeconomic factors, interpersonal relationship skills, students' attitude towards university environment and academic programme. Therefore this study sought to verify the influence of these factors on social and academic adjustment of students in the selected university.

However, before establishing the impact of these factors, the study first established the level of social and academic adjustments of the sampled students in the selected university.

### ***Social Adjustment***

To establish the level of social adjustment in the university, the sampled students were presented with five statements depicting their satisfaction with and participation in various social activities in the university. These activities were used as indicators of social adjustment. The students were requested to rate their level of satisfaction with and participation in social activities in the university on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (where 1 = strong disagree, while 5 = strongly agree). The higher the score, the higher was the level of satisfaction with and participation in social activities in the university, and vice versa. Note that for each statement/social activity a mean score was calculated. The mean score ranges from 1 to 5, and was used in to guide in ranking the statements so as to understand how the respondents generally varied in their responses on the various social activities in the university. This helped to distinguish the importance of each activity and aspect to the respondents. Table 5 shows the distribution of their responses on social adjustments.

**Table 5 Participation in and Satisfaction with Social Activities in the University**

Statement	Response %					Means
	SD	D	U	A	SA	
I get along well with roommates	5.9	10.1	7.0	46.3	30.6	3.86
It is difficult to be at ease with others	34.6	30.3	16.9	18.3	0.0	3.81
I enjoy university environment	8.7	12.1	7.6	52.0	19.7	3.62
Being independent has not been easy in this university	12.6	19.4	6.5	32.0	29.5	3.46
I am satisfied with extracurricular activities at university	14.9	24.4	20.8	29.8	10.1	2.96

N=356

Table 5 indicates that the respondents were generally satisfied their roommates, were at ease with others, the university environment and interdependency among students. This was demonstrated by the average mean scores recorded in four out of the five social activities ranging from 3.46 to 3.86. The students observed that they got along well with their roommates; were at ease with others; enjoyed the university environment; and depended on one another in the university. However, they were less satisfied with the extracurricular activities at the university. This suggests that on the overall, the sampled students were satisfied with the social activities in their university. This was likely to enable them to effectively adjust and integrate into social fabric of the university environment.

The responses to each constituent social activity were scored on a scale of 1, indicating least level of satisfaction and participation, to 5, indicating highest level of satisfaction and participation in the social activity. However, the overall social adjustment of a student will depend on the cumulative interaction and assessment of the all the five social activities. The individual social activity scores were summed up to form a social adjustment index score for each respondent. The index score varied between 5, indicating the least overall level of social adjustment, and 25, indicating the highest overall level of social adjustment. The higher the score, the higher was the level of social adjustment in the university among university students, and vice versa. The index score had a mean score of 17.71 (std deviation 3.188) and was later collapsed into three ordinal categories in order to differentiate between the levels of social adjustment in the university among the sampled respondents.

This included a score of 5-11 meaning low social adjustment, a score of 12-18 (moderate/average) and a score of 19-5 meaning high social adjustment in the university. Table 6 summarizes the levels of social adjustment among university students.

**Table 6 Levels of Social Adjustment among University Students**

Levels of Social Adjustment	Frequency	Percent
Low	13	3.7
Moderate	203	57.0
High	140	39.3
Total	356	100.0

Table 6 indicates that majority (96.3%) of the students had at least moderate social adjustment in the university. Out of 96.3 percent, 57.0 percent of them had moderate social adjustment while 39.3 percent had high social adjustment. The relatively high social adjustment reflected the way the respondents rated the individual social activities in the university. This level of social adjustment was likely to facilitate high academic adjustment in the university. These findings support previous studies which indicate that social adjustment influences academic adjustment. For instance, Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) observed that, personal adjustment and integration into social fabric of university environment play a role and is as important as academic factors throughout the students' life. Rong and Gable (1999) emphasized the importance that living environment, social support and making meaningful relationship connections have on students' overall adjustment to the college environment. Institutions that provide opportunities for not only academic support, but also social and personal support increase their retention rates (Consolvo, 2002).

### **Academic Adjustment**

To establish the level of academic adjustment in the university, the sampled students were presented with eleven statements depicting their satisfaction with various academic activities in the university. These statements were derived from the following main academic activities students' motivation to complete academic work, success in meeting academic requirements, academic effort and satisfaction with academic environment. The interest in academic adjustment is derived from the fact that students enrol in learning institutions to first and foremost pursue academic goals. The students were requested to rate their level of satisfaction with statements derived from the above academic activities in the university on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (where 1 = strong disagree, while 5 = strongly agree). The higher the score, the higher was the level of satisfaction with academic activities in the university, and vice versa. Note that for each statement/academic activity; a mean score was calculated. The mean score ranges from 1 to 5, and was used in to guide in ranking the statements so as to understand how the respondents generally varied in their responses on the various academic activities in the university. This helped to distinguish the importance of the - each activity and aspect to the respondents. Table 7 shows the distribution of their responses on academic activities.

**Table 7 Satisfaction with Academic Activities in the University**

Statement	Response %					Means
	SD	D	U	A	SA	
I attend lectures/classes regularly.	3.4	1.7	2.2	37.1	55.6	4.40
I do class assignments.	3.1	3.7	4.2	44.9	44.1	4.23
I have defined academic goals.	1.7	3.7	11.0	41.9	41.9	4.19
I develop interest in learning.	3.1	4.2	8.7	42.7	41.3	4.15
I am satisfied with the course I enrolled in.	7.3	5.3	5.9	30.9	50.6	4.12
I am satisfied with my academic performance.	4.5	13.2	16.3	44.4	21.6	3.65
I enjoy group discussions.	8.1	12.9	14.0	41.6	23.3	3.65
I find it difficult to manage time at university.	28.4	27.5	16.3	27.8	0.0	3.56
I effectively participate in class during lectures.	8.4	14.6	15.7	45.5	15.7	3.46
I utilize library services regularly.	16.3	20.5	14.9	33.4	14.9	3.10
I balance extracurricular activities and academic work.	12.1	25.6	17.7	30.9	13.8	3.09

N=356

Table 7 indicates that the respondents rated all the eleven academic activities above average (mean scores above 3.00) indicating above average level of satisfaction with them. The mean scores for the eleven academic activities ranged from 3.09 to 4.40. The students observed that 'they attended classes regularly, did class assignments, had, defined academic goals, and developed interest in learning.

They were satisfied with their courses and academic performance; enjoyed group discussions; found it easy to manage time; participated in class during lectures; utilized library services regularly; and balanced extracurricular activities and academic work. This suggests that on the overall, the sampled students were satisfied with their courses and academic performance and the academic environment in the university. This was likely to enable them to effectively adjust to their academic life and concentrate in their academic work. The responses to each constituent academic activity were scored on a scale of 1, indicating least level of satisfaction, to 5, indicating highest level of satisfaction with the academic activity. However, the overall academic adjustment of a student will depend on the cumulative interaction and assessment of the all the eleven academic activities. The individual academic activity' scores were summed up to form an academic adjustment index score for each respondent. The index score varied between 11, indicating the least overall level of academic adjustment, and 55, indicating the highest overall level of academic adjustment. The higher the score, the higher was the level of academic adjustment in the university among university students, and vice versa. The index score had a mean score of 41.54 (std deviation 6.421) and was later collapsed into three ordinal categories in order to differentiate between the levels of academic adjustment in the university among the sampled respondents. This included a score of 11-25 meaning low academic adjustment, a score of 26-40 (moderate/average) and a score of 41-55 meaning high academic adjustment in the university. Table 8 summarizes the levels of academic adjustment among university students.

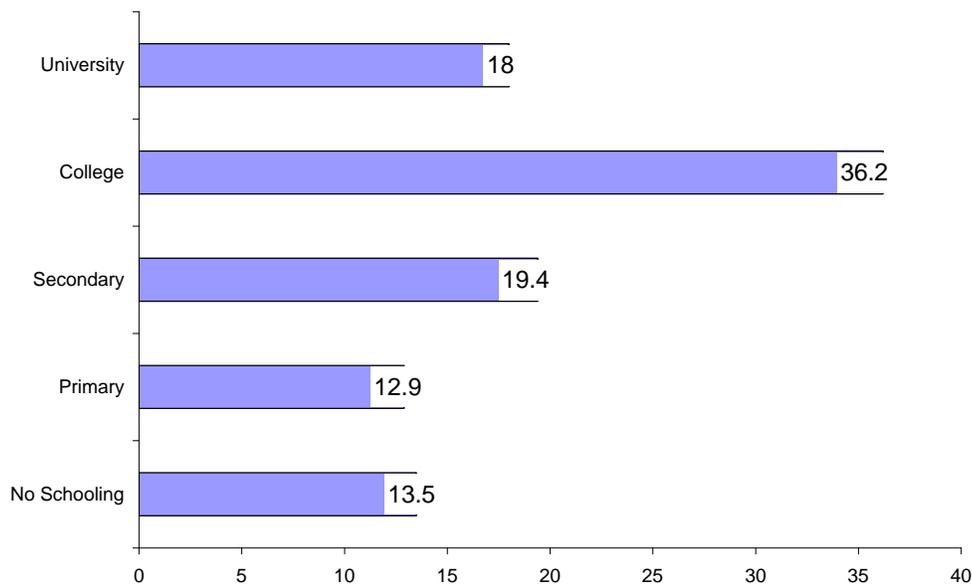
**Table 8 Levels of Academic Adjustment among University Students**

Levels of academic adjustment	Frequency	Percent
Low	6	1.7
Moderate	132	37.1
High	218	61.2
Total	356	100.0

Table 8 indicates that majority (98.3%) of the students had at least moderate academic adjustment in the university. Out of 98.3 percent, 61.2 percent of them had high academic adjustment while 37.1 percent had moderate academic adjustment. The high academic adjustment reflected the way the respondents rated the individual academic activities in the university. This level of academic adjustment was likely to facilitate satisfaction with academic courses and high academic performance in the university. These findings support previous studies such as Russell and Petrie (1992), in their study on academic adjustment of colleges and/or university student concluded that many students who succeed academically in high school do not show similar patterns of success in the university.

***Socio-Economic Factors and Social and Academic Adjustment***

The first objective of the study sought to establish the influence of socio-economic factors on students' social and academic adjustment.



**Figure 3: Level of Education of Parents of University Students**

To do this, the study considered the following socio-economic factors: parental level of education, income and occupation. This was based on the assumption that the socio-economic status of a parent greatly influences the level of a child's adjustment in various aspects of life. These socio-economic factors were first described to assess their variations among the sampled students. The study established that the 356 students varied in their parents' level of education as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 shows that 73.6 percent of the parents of the sampled students had at least secondary school level of education. This level of education was considered adequate to motivate their children for higher academic achievement. Such parents were also in a good position to secure gainful employment that could enable them meet their family economic obligations. The level of education determines the ability to secure employment, the kind of employment and even the level of income. To establish the nature and kind of occupation that the parents were engaged in, the respondents were asked to categorize it in terms of non-skilled, skilled and professional occupation. Table 9 depicts this nature of occupation of the parents of the 356 students.

**Table 9 Nature of Occupation of the Parents of University Students**

Nature of occupation	Frequency	Percent
Non skilled	95	26.7
Skilled	119	33.4
Professional	142	39.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 9 shows that the parents had diverse categories of occupation with 26.7 percent engaged in non-skilled occupation, 33.4 percent were in skilled occupation, while 39.9 percent had professional occupation. The nature and kind of occupation will determine the income of the family and therefore the economic status. This will in turn influence the social and academic adjustment of their students. The students were asked to estimate the category of the monthly income of their families. Table 10 illustrates the variations in these incomes.

**Table 10 Estimated Category of Family Income**

Income categories	Frequency	Percent
Below 10,000	137	38.5
10,000 to 30,000	100	28.1
30,000 to 50,000	64	18.0
50,000 to 80,000	22	6.2
Above 80,000	33	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 10 indicates that 84.6 percent of the students estimated their family income to be Kshs 50,000 and below. These income levels reflect the general income levels of majority of the working people in the country. The level of income and family demands will determine the socio-economic status of the student in the university. This will in turn influence the social and academic adjustment of the student. After describing the socio-economic factors and their variations among students, the study sought to determine their influence on social and academic adjustment of the students. This was done using chi square statistical test. Chi-square was used to compare the frequency of cases found in one variable in two or more unrelated samples or categories of another variable. It is preferred when dealing with variables that have been categorized, levels of social and academic adjustment and parental level of education, occupation and family monthly income. In order to calculate the Chi-square statistic, socio-economic factors were cross tabulated by the levels of social and academic adjustment of the students in the university. Table 11 shows a cross tabulation of levels of social adjustment by the level of education of the parents.

**Table 11 Level of Social Adjustment across Parental Level of Education**

Level of education: Secondary

Level of education			Level of education					Total
			No schooling	Primary	Secondary	College	University	
Level of education	Low	Count	3	0	3	4	3	13
		%	6.3%	0%	4.3%	3.1%	4.7%	3.7%
	Moderate	Count	18	22	44	80	39	203
		%	37.5%	47.8%	63.8%	62.0%	60.9%	57.0%
	High	Count	27	24	22	45	22	140
		%	56.3%	52.2%	31.9%	34.9%	34.4%	39.3%
<b>Total</b>			<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>356</b>

Table 11 suggests that there was a significant difference in the level of social adjustment according to the level of education of the parents of the students. It can be observed that majority of the students with parents who had at least secondary level of education had moderate level of social adjustment. However, contrary to the expectations, more students from families where parents had low levels education had high levels of social adjustment compared to those with at least secondary school education. This was demonstrated by the fact that 56.3 percent and 52.2 percent of the parents with no schooling and primary school education had high social adjustment. The low educational level of education of the parents is a challenge to the students and therefore forcing them to effectively adjust to the university. These findings support previous studies such as Mishra and Sing (1998) which showed that parental education had a significant influence on the aspiration levels of their children.

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study sought to determine the influence of selected factors on social and academic adjustment of undergraduate students of Egerton University, Njoro Campus. This broad objective was guided by the following specific objectives:

- (i) To determine the influence of socio-economic factors, interpersonal relationship skills, students' attitude towards university environment and academic programme on social and academic adjustment of undergraduate students at the university.
- (ii) To investigate whether there is any gender differences in social and academic adjustment among, the undergraduate students at the university.
- (iii) To determine whether the year of study influence social and academic adjustment among the undergraduate students at the university.
- (iv) To examine the role of guidance and counselling in undergraduate students academic and social adjustment at the university.

Both primary and secondary data were used to verify and understand the factors influencing social and academic adjustment of students at the university. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire with students and in-depth interview with student peer counsellors, university student counsellors and dean of students. A sample of 356 was selected and involved in the study. Secondary data was collected, from documented information on social and academic adjustment in the selected university, the country and elsewhere. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS version 11.5 for Windows.

### **Summary of the Research Findings**

Based on the study objectives and data analysis, the following major research findings are presented:

- (i) Socio-economic factors significantly influence the level of students' social adjustment in the university. However, more students from families where parents had low levels of education, non-skilled employment and low monthly income had high levels of social adjustment compared to others. But the same socioeconomic factors had no significant influence the level of students' academic adjustment in the university. There was a positive and significant correlation between the level of interpersonal relationship and social adjustment and academic adjustment of students in the university.
- (ii) There was no statistically significant gender difference in social and academic adjustment among undergraduate students at the university.
- (iii) There was no statistically significant difference in social adjustment among university students as per the year of study. However, there was a statistically significant difference in academic adjustment among University students as per the year of study.
- (iv) Guidance and counselling programme in the university offered counselling services to students. They targeted mostly those students who sought the services voluntarily. However, apart from those students who willingly sought assistance of the counsellors, the guidance and counselling programme also offered orientation services to all new students when reporting to the university. Orientation was meant to induct or introduce the students to university life.

### **Conclusion**

The study investigated the social and academic adjustment of undergraduate students of Egerton University, Njoro Campus. Such an assessment was considered useful in analyzing the way undergraduate students were adjusting to university life and transiting from secondary schools.

The concerned agencies and stakeholders could use the important insights of this study in coming up with measures that shall enhance to enhance effective students adjustment to the new academic level and associated challenges.

Based on the summary findings, the study concludes that guidance and counselling programme has a critical role to play in assisting students to adjust in the university. However, the following conclusions are based on the specific objectives of the study:

- (i) Interpersonal relationships and the attitude of students towards university environment and academic programme were critical factors influencing social adjustment and academic adjustment of undergraduate students in the university.
- (ii) Both male and female students were exposed to the same university social and academic environment that influenced their similar social and academic adjustment in the university.
- (iii) First year students have a higher level of academic adjustment compared to other students in the university.
- (iv) Guidance and counselling programme has a critical role to play in assisting students to adjust in the university.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the above conclusions, this study makes the following recommendations about social and academic adjustment of under-graduate students in the selected university and beyond:

- (i) There is need for the university to encourage social activities that can facilitate effective interpersonal relationships among students.
- (ii) There is need for the university to increase the level of publicity of guidance and counselling programme and its services in the universities so as to assist students in coping and adjusting to university life.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The subject of social and academic adjustment in universities has attracted little research attention compared to primary and secondary schools. In most cases, it is assumed that university students automatically and effectively adjust to social and academic environments of the university. However, in reality, these students face several challenges in adjusting and coping with the new social and academic conditions. Therefore, limited empirical studies exist on the factors responsible for the social and academic adjustment of students in the university. From the findings of this study, the following areas are suggested for further research.

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