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**Influence of Social Awareness on Performance of Teachers in Public
Secondary Schools in Machakos County, Kenya**



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Influence of Social Awareness on Performance of Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Machakos County, Kenya



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Abstract

Purpose: This study examined the influence of social awareness on the performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Machakos County, Kenya.

Methodology: A pragmatism orientation and mixed-methods design were adopted. The target population comprised 3,500 teachers in 377 public secondary schools, from which a sample of 486 was drawn using stratified random and purposive sampling. Usable quantitative responses were obtained from 329 respondents, while qualitative evidence was generated through interviews with principals and deputy principals. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability and factor-adequacy tests, diagnostic tests, and simple linear regression, complemented by thematic analysis of interview evidence.

Findings: Social awareness recorded a high composite mean ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.47$). The regression model indicated a positive association between social awareness and teacher performance ($R^2 = .092$), with the reported slope statistically significant ($\beta = 0.020$, $p = .040$). Interview evidence reinforced the importance of empathy, organisational awareness, supportive discipline, and responsiveness to learners' circumstances. The study concludes that strengthening teachers' social awareness may contribute to more responsive classroom management and improved professional performance.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study makes a unique contribution to theory by applying Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory to the realm of teacher performance, by offering evidence to support the exploration of teacher professional development, and through the evidence presented. This identifies the important components of teacher performance in terms of empathy, organisational awareness, and responsive classroom management.

Keywords: *Social Awareness, Emotional Intelligence, Teacher Performance, Empathy, Organisational Awareness, Service Orientation, Secondary Schools, Machakos County, Kenya*

JEL Codes: *I21, J24, M12, M54*

1. Introduction

Social awareness is the ability to recognize and comprehend emotions, thoughts, needs and social dynamics of others and to act accordingly (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018). In Goleman's definition, it contains empathy, organisation awareness, and service orientation (Goleman, 2002). Empathy can assist teachers in identifying signs of anxiety, distress and/or disengagement in a learner, or outside of school problems. The awareness of organizations can assist teachers in understanding the norms of the school, informal relationships, institutional priorities and power structures. Service orientation focuses on the needs of the learners and students and the response(s) needed. Taken together these abilities can enhance communication, trust, collaboration and context specific classroom decisions.

Social awareness is particularly evident in situations where teachers deal with a variety of learner needs and ongoing behavioural issues. Effective classroom management is not just about implementing classroom rules; it is also about the teacher's interpretation of learner behaviour, understanding of social circumstances, classroom expectations, and a response that is proportionate. The classroom management is physical, organisational, emotional and social dimensions (Good and Lavigne 2017). Likewise, Franklin and Harrington (2019) highlight how teacher practice and student engagement are connected. This implies that in the context of education, social awareness can be an inter-personal mechanism by which teachers convert their emotional and social information into appropriate instruction and discipline.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is one such factor that is more widely understood as a field of interest that deals with the recognition, understanding, and response to emotions. Salovey and Mayer (1990) placed emotional intelligence within the realm of appraisal and usage of emotional information, while Goleman (1998b, 2002) proposed a competency model that broke emotional skills down into four areas such as social awareness. The present study separates social awareness from teaching as teaching is always done in relation to someone. Teachers engage with students, staff, administrators, parents, and community actors on a regular basis and the quality of those interactions has the potential to impact classroom culture, student conduct, involvement, and working together.

Teachers turn the curriculum intention, institutional expectations, and pedagogical knowledge into day-to-day learning experiences and thus play a vital role in the quality, efficiency, and sustainability of education systems. Performance is the successful and efficient completion of tasks assigned and the fulfillment of a professional task according to standards (Dessler, 2020). Performance in schools is manifested in the delivery of instruction, management of the classroom, assessment, support of the learners, collaboration with colleagues and the ability to maintain productive learning environments. From the literature provided it can be seen that teacher effectiveness is related to student learning and the quality of education in general (Escribano et al., 2024; Suhardi et al., 2020; Utami & Harini, 2019). Thus, issues affecting the interpretation,

response, and management of social/emotional demands by teachers warrant more empirical attention.

A Kenyan secondary-school setting is a context of particular relevance for the examination of this relationship. The study establishes the changes in mean KCSE scores in sampled public secondary schools in Machakos County from 2018 to 2024, and concludes that the cases of indiscipline in the studied schools have increased in the Eastern region over the years. These indicators do not provide evidence of the effects of teacher emotional competencies on learner outcomes, but they do capture a context in which teachers are expected to balance teaching, discipline, learner wellbeing and institutional goals. Teacher social awareness is therefore considered as one of the potentially important aspects of professional functioning, but not as a replacement for pedagogical competence, school leadership, resources or other factors that influence professional functioning.

The previous studies have shown the relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher effectiveness (Kgosiemang & Khoza, 2022; Su et al., 2022), classroom management (Valente et al., 2019, 2020), engagement and teaching creativity (Valente et al., 2019, 2020). There is also research evidence that goes beyond education that there is a link between social awareness and organisational outcomes and leadership. Mwithi et al (2016) indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between financial performance and social-awareness leadership competency among the Kenyan state corporations, and Mwanja (2023) concluded that there was a strong relationship between the managers' social awareness and leadership performance at a Kenyan university. The same positive significant relationship between social awareness and organisational innovativeness among manufacturing firms in Nigeria was reported by Fubara (2020). However, the evidence that discusses the link between social awareness as a specific EI competency and teacher performance in public secondary schools in Kenya is limited in the literature provided for this manuscript.

It is not just that there is no research on emotional intelligence. Instead, much of the current evidence bundles EI into a generalised construct, analyses a range of other occupational categories, or looks at outcomes like leadership, organisational performance or innovativeness. The objective of the study was to examine the influence of social-awareness on performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Machakos County, Kenya, while the null hypothesis of the study was that there is no significant relationship between social-awareness on performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Machakos County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Literature

The Emotional Intelligence Theory by Goleman is the main theoretical framework for this study. Goleman (1998b) defined emotional intelligence as a set of competencies that would allow people to identify, comprehend, and regulate their emotions and to make good use of that knowledge in social and professional situations. Goleman, Boyatzis, and Rhee's (2002) later competency model

restructured EI into four areas: emotional intelligence, emotional knowledge, emotional understanding, and emotional management. Social awareness is then not simply considered as an interpersonal characteristic, but rather a separate area of knowledge and ability that links people's awareness of others to their ability to interact and perform effectively with them.

The social-awareness domain consists of empathy, organisational awareness and service orientation. Empathy is about understanding others' emotions, needs and perspectives. Organisational awareness relates to being attuned to the emotional currents, relationships, norms and power structures of an organisation. Service orientation is one way of being concerned with other people's needs, and responding to them. These skills are applicable in a school context when considering students' situations, the dynamics of staff and colleagues, assisting others, and relating to the institutional expectations. The theory thus suggests that teachers with greater social awareness would be more likely to understand interpersonal cues and to respond with effective adaptive behaviours in order to promote teaching and learning in the classroom.

The theory also aligns with evidence of the importance of teacher–student relationships and classroom climate for engagement and learning. Longobardi et al. (2021) demonstrated that quality of student-teacher relationships is connected to prosocial behaviour and school-related outcomes, and Engels et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of affective teacher-student relationships to student engagement and outcomes. These results support a relational argument for the study of social awareness within teacher performance; the teacher's understanding of learners and their needs can impact the quality of interaction that occurs during teaching.

However, it should not be assumed that EQ is the only factor in teacher effectiveness. The study acknowledges a criticism that too much focus on EI can override pedagogical expertise, content knowledge, instructional delivery and institutional factors. Social awareness is not enough to overcome poor subject knowledge, lack of resources, poor leadership and/or poor organisational conditions. Therefore, social awareness is taken to be a contributory competency in the present study, its relationship with performance is considered as a part of a broader education system.

Bar-On's mixed model provides an alternative view, in which emotional-social intelligence is viewed as a collection of emotional and social competencies that are related to the ability to cope with the demands and stresses of the environment (Bar-On, 1997, 2006). While the present study is essentially a study of Goleman's model, the model of Bar-On strengthens the hypothesis that interpersonal competence can facilitate adaptive functioning. Goal-Setting Theory also serves as a helpful secondary consideration since goal direction, goal effort, goal persistence, goal feedback, and goal strategies are necessary to effective performance (Locke & Latham, 2002, 2019). Socially aware teachers might be more apt to understand feedback and the expectations of the various stakeholders and hence improve instructional and classroom-management approaches. But Goleman's framework is the one most directly related to the theoretical basis since the independent variable is clearly defined as social awareness.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Social awareness is identifying and comprehending the feelings of others (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018). They defined social awareness as the way people handle relationships and their comprehension of others' feelings, needs, and fears. Empirical evidence generally shows that empirical studies yield largely positive outcomes in terms of emotional and social competencies to performance outcomes. For instance, according to Drigas and Papoutsis, (2018), listening and observing are two essential abilities in social awareness competency. Moreover, it enables people to acknowledge and understand people's emotions when they are in the thick of it. Individuals with social awareness are able to comprehend the relationships of the people in their surroundings. Additionally, it involves valuing and recognising other people's thoughts, as well as the structures inside organisations and social networks. The social awareness dimension encompasses one's ability to discern emotions of others, understand their point of view, and develop an active interest in their concerns (Goleman et al., 2002). They stated that social awareness comprises three social competencies, namely empathy, organisational awareness, and service orientation.

Empathy is the capacity to sympathize with and acknowledge the feelings, needs, and concerns of others (Goleman, 2002). He further states that empathy encourages individuals to seek out and completely appreciate other people's emotions or actions, along with the motivation behind them. Moreover, it allows an individual to perceive the other person's viewpoint, argument, or situation through their own lenses. Additionally, it is crucial to keep in mind that dealing with other people's views via their perspective doesn't mean that the individual would concur with their convictions, opinions, or reasoning. Rather, empathy promotes tolerance, understanding, and respect, which facilitates better communication, stronger bonds, and more successful conflict resolution in both personal and professional settings. Additionally, it is essential for leadership, teaching, and teamwork because compassionate people are better able to foster inclusive workplaces where different viewpoints are accepted and valued, inspire trust, and promote collaboration.

Organisational awareness is the ability to correctly detect emotional currents as well as political power patterns in groups (Goleman, 1998a, 2002). He asserts that Organisational awareness empowers an individual to better understand the culture in which the emotions of others function. Additionally, Organisational awareness encourages individuals to realize the extent to which the organisational frameworks under which they work influence their emotions. Service orientation can be described as the ability to understand the desires and concerns of others while focusing one's energy on others (Goleman, 2002). He states that it entails giving people feedback and recommendations that are in their best interests after they have grasped their feelings and how the organisation in which they work impacts them. Additionally, researchers contend that organizational awareness and service orientation are essential elements of social competence because they help people manage workplace dynamics, establish trust, and promote teamwork (Boyatzis, 2018). Additionally, by encouraging empathy, moral judgment, and responsiveness to

stakeholder requirements, these abilities improve leadership effectiveness (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Nelson & Low, 2011).

According to Treadway et al. (2013), employees with strong connections tend to perform better than those who are quiet and antisocial. This is due to their ability to seek advice on job issues from knowledgeable colleagues, as well as their motivation to come to work and socialize. Leaders who have excellent organisational awareness can also be adept at politics, acknowledge crucial social networks, and understand key power dynamics in workplaces (Treadway et al., 2013). Furthermore, leaders exhibiting high service-focused competency generally foster a constructive emotional work climate that promotes relationships between them and their stakeholders, customers, and clients, while guaranteeing their goals and priorities are realized (Ciarrochi & Mayer, 2013).

According to Ciarrochi and Mayer, (2013), leaders with a strong sense of social awareness are more receptive to a wide range of emotional signals in a person or group than leaders without these abilities. Leaders with high empathy proficiency, according to Druskat et al., (2013), exercise tolerance to listen carefully to understand their followers' perspectives on issues. This enables leaders to interact well with followers from different walks of life (Nwokah & Ahiauzu, 2010). Additionally, socially conscious leaders promote diversity, establish trust, and establish welcoming workplaces where different perspectives are valued, all of which strengthen teamwork, boost morale, and increase overall organizational effectiveness. Additionally, these leaders exhibit cultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and adaptability, which enable them to lead different teams successfully, settle disputes amicably, and motivate devotion and loyalty among their followers.

A study done by Mwithi et al. (2016) on the effects of social awareness leadership competence on the performance of state corporations in Kenya revealed that social awareness leadership competence had a positive significant relationship with the financial performance of state corporation in Kenya. Another study by (Mwania, 2023) examined the relationship between managers' social awareness and leadership performance at South Eastern Kenya University. The target population consisted of all 75 managers at South Eastern Kenya University, and the study adopted an ex-post-facto research design. The study revealed a strong relationship between managers' social awareness and leadership performance, and recommended that persons with high levels of social awareness should be hired since they are excellent at interacting with customers.

Fubara, (2020) study surveyed the relationship between Social Awareness and Organizational Innovativeness of Manufacturing Firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study involved 97 managerial personnel from 20 functional manufacturing enterprises in Rivers State and adopted a cross-sectional research design. The study revealed a positive and significant relationship between social awareness and organizational innovativeness. The conclusions of the study revealed that; social connections and awareness of environmental trends could help businesses generate goods and

services that satisfy customers while making a profit. The study found that understanding social relationships and environmental trends can help organisations generate customer-satisfying products and services while remaining profitable. The study suggests that while top managers should drive innovation, there should also be a framework in place to solicit and incorporate ideas and suggestions from subordinates.

Despite these results, three gaps are still to be filled. Firstly, there have been some studies on emotional intelligence as a whole phenomenon, not focused on social awareness. Second, the research on social awareness that was found in the source manuscript is centered on organisational leadership, performance, or innovativeness, not public secondary-school teachers. Thirdly, there is limited contextual data in Machakos County, Kenya. The current study addresses these gaps by examining the influence of social-awareness on performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Machakos County, and by adding quantitative and qualitative data from public secondary schools.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model suggests that social awareness is positively related to teacher performance. Social awareness is manifested in terms of empathy, service orientation and organisation awareness, as per Goleman's competency framework. Classroom management, instructional leadership, learner engagement and student discipline are all indicative of teacher performance.

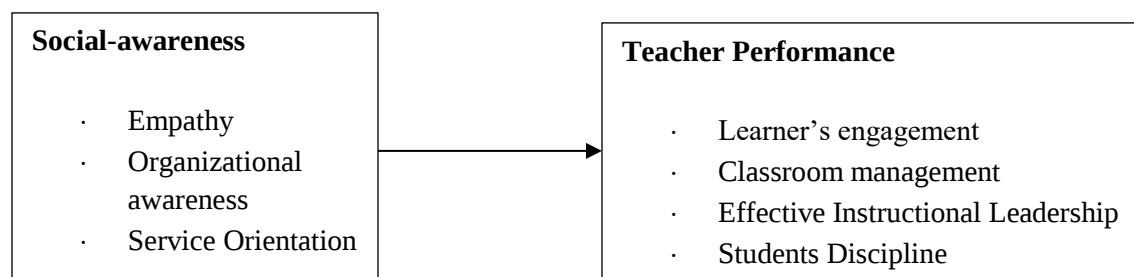


Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking social awareness and teacher performance

Source: Author's conceptualization based on Goleman (2002) and Adom et al. (2018).

3. Methodology

The study used a pragmatism research philosophy since the research was aimed at studying an empirically testable relationship in terms of observable measures and statistical inference. The design was a mixed method which combined quantitative survey evidence with qualitative interview evidence. The quantitative part gave school leaders estimates on the level and statistical association of social awareness and teacher performance, whereas the qualitative part gave the contextual explanations. This approach is reflective of the perspective that the "mixed method approach" could lead to a more robust interpretation of complex phenomena in organizations and education (Creswell & Creswell, 2020; Kothari & Garg, 2014).

A total of 3,500 teachers in 377 public secondary schools in nine sub-counties of Machakos County were targeted. The population consisted of principals and deputy principals and other teaching staff. The finite population formula (Yamane, 1967) was used to determine a sample of 486 teachers, adjusted for a margin of error of 4.21% that is, $n = N / [1 + N(e^2)]$, where $N = 3,500$ and the adjusted margin of error was $e = 0.0421$. The calculation produced a sample of 486 respondents. Stratified random sampling was adopted for representation across the school categories or teacher cadres and purposive sampling was adopted for school leaders since principals and deputy principals have direct knowledge of the management of schools, teacher supervision, learners' discipline and institutional practices. The number of available quantitative responses analysed, which is provided in the results, is 329.

A structured questionnaire with five-point Likert type items and interview guide was used to gather the data. The Likert Scale was from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Eight items were used to measure social awareness and eight items were used to measure teacher performance. The social-awareness items were able to measure empathy, feedback, working together, helping each other, awareness of school-wide social norms, service orientation and awareness of policy and initiatives. The interview was an opportunity to gather the views of principals and deputy principals. The results section indicates that principals (P1–P20) and deputy principals (DP1–DP25) are the successful interviewers; this number should remain as the true interview sample for the manuscript.

Pretesting was conducted to enhance clarity and to ensure reliability and validity. The internal consistency was checked by using Cronbach's alpha. The social-awareness scale had an α level of .78, and the teacher-performance scale had an α level of .75, which are both greater than the .70 threshold for acceptable internal consistency. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin statistic and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to assess the construct of the instrument. The social awareness KMO was .621 with Bartlett's $p < .001$, and the teacher performance KMO was .690 with Bartlett's $p < .001$, which suggested that the patterns of item correlations were satisfactory for factor analysis assessment.

Data were coded and analysed in Stata 22 for quantitative data. Means and standard deviations were used as descriptive statistics. Association between social awareness and teacher performance was tested using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression was used to estimate the influence of social awareness on teacher performance. Before making an estimation of the regression, they were tested for homoscedasticity, normality and linearity.

The study adhered to the research ethics procedures described in the study. The research received approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and was approved by the education administration in Machakos County. It was voluntary participation, respondents were not identified on the instruments, and collected information was confidential and

for research. The safeguards are relevant as they focused on perceptions of teacher performance and interpersonal behaviour in schools.

4. Results

The results are presented in the order of measurement quality, descriptive evidence, diagnostic assessment, and hypothesis testing. The analysis focuses specifically on examining the influence of social awareness on performance of teachers in public secondary schools in Machakos County.

4.1 Measurement reliability and construct adequacy

Table 1. Reliability of study constructs

Construct	Cronbach's α	Items
Social awareness	.78	8
Teacher performance	.75	8

Source: Research data (2026).

The social-awareness scale in Table 1 demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .78$), while teacher performance also met the accepted threshold ($\alpha = .75$). The results indicate that the items within each construct were sufficiently interrelated for composite analysis.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's tests

Construct	KMO	Bartlett's p	Assessment
Social awareness	.621	< .001	Adequate
Teacher performance	.690	< .001	Adequate

Source: Research data (2026).

From Table 2, KMO and Bartlett's results further supported construct adequacy. Social awareness produced KMO = .621 and Bartlett's $p < .001$; teacher performance produced KMO = .690 and Bartlett's $p < .001$. These values indicate adequate sampling and statistically significant inter-item correlations for the intended construct assessment.

4.2 Descriptive results for social awareness and Teacher Performance

This section presents descriptive results for social awareness and teacher performance. Both constructs were measured using five-point Likert-scale items, ranging from 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4- agree and 5- strongly agree. The analysis reports the mean and standard deviation for each item to indicate the respondents' level of agreement and the dispersion of their responses. Higher mean scores therefore reflect stronger perceptions of social awareness and teacher performance among the sampled population.

4.2.1 Social Awareness

Table 3 presents the descriptive results for social awareness.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for social awareness

Indicator	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	M	SD
I consistently respond with concern when students experience stress or anxiety, whether related to school or personal matters.	33.43	66.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.33	0.47
I regularly receive students and colleagues' feedback on my approach to empathetical situations and classroom management.	26.75	71.73	0.91	0.30	0.30	4.24	0.51
I always collaborate with other teachers and staff to address classroom management challenges or support students with ongoing behavioral challenges.	27.05	72.04	0.91	0.00	0.00	4.26	0.46
I consistently support and promote school-wide behavioural and social norms in my classroom.	26.75	71.43	1.82	0.00	0.00	4.28	0.47
I continuously ensure that my classroom management practices align with my commitment to serving my students' best interests.	28.88	70.82	0.30	0.00	0.00	4.29	0.46
Am regularly informed about school-wide policies, initiatives, and changes that affect classroom management practices.	28.88	70.21	0.91	0.00	0.00	4.28	0.46
Composite social awareness	—	—	—	—	—	4.30	0.47

Source: Research Data (2026).

Descriptive results for social awareness in Table 3 were rated highly by respondents, with item means ranged from 4.24 to 4.33 with a composite mean of 4.3. The above 4.2 mean on the Likert scale, demonstrates a strong positive perception of the role of social awareness on teacher performance.

The statement that registered the highest mean score of 4.33 was the statement “I consistently respond with concern when students experience stress or anxiety, whether related to school or personal matters”. This implies that teachers in Machakos County strongly perceive themselves as empathetic and highly responsive to their students' emotional and psychological distress. Similarly, a high mean score of 4.29 was recorded for the statement: “*I continuously ensure that*

my classroom management practices align with my commitment to serving my students' best interests," which underscores a powerful dedication to holistic student welfare.

Furthermore, solid alignment between individual classroom management and broader institutional frameworks was evidenced by a high mean score for school-level connection. Specifically, the statement "I consistently support and promote school-wide behavioural and social norms" yielded an average score of 4.28, which closely mirrored the mean score recorded for being regularly informed about school-wide policies. Conversely, the indicator with the lowest mean score of 4.24 is "I regularly receive students and colleagues' feedback on my approach to empathy situations and classroom management", this implies that while teachers are empathetic, the formal or informal feedback loops between them, their peers, and students regarding their management styles are comparatively less established compared to the other issues highlighted.

The 4.3 composite mean confirms that the respondents perceived social awareness as a key determinant of teacher performance. The teachers demonstrated advanced emotional intelligence, strong collaborative tendencies, and an acute awareness of school-wide behavioural dynamics.

The standard deviation ranged from 0.46 to 0.51, with an aggregate standard deviation of 0.47. Most of these were below 0.50, indicating a low dispersion variation of responses around the mean. Thus, the respondents had a relatively similar perception of the influence of the items on social awareness on teacher performance. The low variability strengthens the reliability of the findings since it shows consensus among teachers, showing that student-centric emotional support is a deeply embedded practice that positively influences teacher performance and classroom dynamics.

The aggregate standard deviation of 0.47 shows that the respondents' opinions were closely clustered around the composite mean of 4.3, reflecting a strong level of agreement and consistency among the respondents on the influence of social awareness on teacher performance in the public secondary schools in Machakos County.

Overall, 28.15% of respondents strongly agreed and 69.53% agreed with the social-awareness statements. The composite standard deviation of 0.47 indicates that responses were relatively concentrated around the mean.

4.2.2 Teacher Performance

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of teacher performance, showing the distribution of respondents' perceptions across the eight performance-related statements.

Table 4: Teacher Performance

Statements	SA%	A%	N%	D%	SD%	Mean	SD
I always involve students in developing classroom rules and expectations to instil a sense of ownership and responsibility.	37.08	62.31	0.30	0.30	0	4.36	0.51
I regularly collaborate with other teachers to design school-wide behaviour management strategies.	32.83	66.26	0.91	0	0	4.32	0.49
I consistently ensure that my communication remains respectful, constructive, and encouraging even when addressing student mistakes or misbehaviour.	27.05	72.04	0.61	0.30	0	4.26	0.49
I always ensure that my directions are clear and understandable to all students into enhance classroom efficiency.	32.83	66.26	0.61	0.30	0	4.31	0.50
I effectively deal with stress or challenges in the classroom without compromising my leadership or the classroom environment.	31.61	66.87	1.52	0	0	4.30	0.49
I always adjust my teaching approaches when students are unable to understand a concept or become disengaged.	33.43	66.57	0	0	0	4.33	0.47
I regularly use various strategies to prevent conflicts from escalating during classroom activities.	29.48	70.52	0	0	0	4.29	0.46
I always ensure that discipline is fair and this influences students' willingness to adhere to rules.	26.14	73.86	0	0	0	4.26	0.44
Average						4.3	0.5

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings in Table 4 indicate that teachers demonstrated a high level of performance across all measured dimensions. Findings on teacher performance indicate that the respondents generally agreed to a great extent that the evaluated items contribute positively to the improvement of

instruction. The individual means ranged from 4.26 to 4.36 with a composite mean of 4.30. On the Likert scale, these scores demonstrate a strong positive perception regarding the role of these specific dimensions in driving teacher performance. Specifically, the most positive rating mean was 4.36, meaning that the respondents strongly agree with the statement, *"I always involve students in rule and expectation development to create a sense of ownership and responsibility"*, which reflected that this measure had the greatest impact on teacher performance. The other high means, 4.29, 4.30, 4.31, 4.32, 4.33 also indicate high levels of agreement on the importance of these measures of performance with the respondents. In addition, there was little difference between the means, suggesting that all of the dimensions of teacher performance were deemed to be important.

The overall mean of 4.3 indicates that the factors examined are considered to be important predictors of teacher success in public secondary schools. This helps instructors' transition from a reactive approach in supervision to being a proactive leader. Since students' participation in setting boundaries around behaviors is strongly associated with classroom cooperation, teachers can foster increased participation by actively co-creating rules with students. Thus, the creation of this common respect means no disruption to instruction, much less time spent on discipline, and more time for instruction, all leading to a smooth and highly effective classroom.

The range of the standard deviation was between 0.44 and 0.51, with an average of 0.5. Most of the values were lower than of sat, making it show low dispersion variation of responses around the mean. The respondents, therefore, had similar perceptions of the impact of the items that were evaluated on the teacher's performance. This low variability helps to reinforce the validity of the results, as the opinions expressed by the respondents are very close to the overall average of 4.30. Finally, these indicators show high degree of consensus among the participants on the effects of these dimensions on the teacher's performance. The study further showed that 31.30% of the participants strongly agreed with the statements, while 68.08% of the respondents agreed.

The results suggest that the factors analyzed have a positive influence on teachers' performance in the public secondary schools in Machakos County.

4.3 Diagnostic assessment

Table 5. Regression diagnostic results for the social-awareness model.

Diagnostic	Statistic	p-value	Interpretation
Multicollinearity	VIF = 1.028; tolerance = 0.973	—	No serious multicollinearity indicated
Homoscedasticity	Breusch–Pagan $\chi^2 = 0.47$	.494	Constant variance retained
Normality	Kolmogorov–Smirnov	.45	Normality not rejected
Linearity	Ramsey RESET $F = 1.20$	.3102	Linear specification retained

Source: Research Data (2026).

Before estimating the regression model, diagnostic tests were conducted to assess whether the underlying assumptions of regression analysis were satisfied. As shown in Table 5, the results indicated no serious multicollinearity, with a VIF of 1.028 and tolerance of 0.973. The Breusch–Pagan test was not significant ($\chi^2 = 0.47$, $p = .494$), indicating that the assumption of constant variance was retained. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test also did not reject normality ($p = .45$), while the Ramsey RESET test was non-significant ($F = 1.20$, $p = .3102$), supporting the linear specification of the model. Overall, the diagnostic results indicate that the assumptions required for estimating the social-awareness regression model were adequately satisfied.

4.4 Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Table 6. Simple linear regression of social awareness on teacher performance

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	95% CI
Constant	0.496	0.012	41.02	< .001	[0.472, 0.519]
Social awareness	0.0201	0.0098	2.05	.0404	[-0.044, 0.040]
R^2	.0916				
N	329				
F	6.49			< .001	

Source: Research data (2026).

The simple linear regression indicated a positive association between social awareness and teacher performance.

$$Y = 0.496 + 0.0201 X_3$$

Where Y= teacher performance in public secondary schools, X_3 is social awareness

The model explained 9.16% of the variance in teacher performance ($R^2 = .0916$; $N = 329$). The reported social-awareness coefficient was positive ($\beta = 0.0201$, $SE = 0.0098$) and statistically significant at the 5% level ($t = 2.05$, $p = .0404$). Thus, the null hypothesis that social awareness has no significant influence on teacher performance was rejected at $\alpha = .05$.

4.5 Qualitative Analysis

The study also collected qualitative data using interview guides administered to school principals and deputy principals. To maintain confidentiality and organize the findings, unique interview codes were assigned based on the number of interviewed. The principals were successfully interviewed and were subsequently coded as P1 through P20 while the 25 deputy principals successfully interviewed were assigned the codes DP1 through DP25 to systematically represent those who participated in the interview sessions.

Responses obtained through interviews from the principals and deputy principals also concurred with the assertion that social awareness influences teacher performance. Specifically, P5 and P19 both agreed that social awareness is centered on empathy, organizational culture, and the ‘unspoken’ dynamics of a school. It is therefore viewed as a foundational pillar of high-level teacher performance. In her own words, DP8 argued:

“We need to be mentors and role models to the students to earn their trust so that they can open up and share with us what they are going through so as to establish the best way forward. A student will open up to a teacher who establishes a safe space”

P9 and P2 assert that a principal’s leadership style is not merely administrative, but deeply communicative and relational. They further stated that it goes beyond “unspoken” dynamics of the school environment, principals actively project and mirror social awareness through distinct verbal, Para-verbal, and non-verbal channels. P2 made a statement: *“ This behavioural learning acts as a primary catalyst for shaping teacher performance and institutional stability”*.

Furthermore, P6 asserted that organizational awareness plays a vital role in classroom management and establishing long-term success and sustainability of the school, stating:

“ It is in the best interest of the teachers to embrace social awareness since it leads to long-term gains and sustainability of the institution”

Moreover, DP5, DP2, P4, P8, and P3 noted social awareness aids principals to understand the socio-economic and psychological challenges students or parents face at home, leading to fair disciplinary policies and supportive guidance programs rather than purely punitive measures.

Notably, DP3 stated *“by reading the emotional temperature of the staffroom, an empathetic principal can notice when teachers are reaching their breaking points and step in with support before it leads to high turnover or poor performance”*.

The results suggest that social awareness significantly influences teacher performance in public secondary schools in Machakos County. These findings are corroborated by Fubara (2020), whose study surveyed the relationship between Social Awareness and Organizational Innovativeness of Manufacturing Firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. Fubara found that understanding social relationships and environmental trends can help organisations effectively meet stakeholder needs. Similarly, a study by Mwanja (2023) examined the relationship between managers' social awareness and leadership performance at South Eastern Kenya University. Mwanja found a strong positive relationship between social awareness and institutional leadership performance and recommended recruiting individuals with high social awareness because of their strong interpersonal and stakeholder interaction skills. Concurrently, the current study extends these insights into the secondary education sub-sector, demonstrating that a teacher's capacity to navigate social-emotional classroom dynamics directly enhances instructional delivery and overall performance. Therefore, qualitative findings converged with the quantitative evidence. These themes provide contextual support for the statistical association reported above.

5. Discussion

The results show that there is a positive relationship between social awareness and teacher performance in the public secondary schools in Machakos County. The composite mean score of 4.30 indicates that overall, teachers have a positive perception of social-awareness behaviours being highly present within their practice. The regression results do offer further support that social awareness contributes to variation in teacher performance, however, the variance difference of 9.16% is also a testament to the fact that social awareness is only part of a larger package of performance. It's a theoretical concept that bolsters a competency-based view of EI without as forceful and unproven an assertion as a view that social awareness is the sole measure of teacher effectiveness.

Empathy is an element that also stood out in the descriptive results in relation to Goleman's (2002) formulation of social awareness. The mean ($M = 4.33$) of responding to student stress and/or anxiety shows that teachers understand that responding to the emotional situation of the student is important. In the real world, an empathetic teacher might be better able to identify between willful misbehavior and anxiety-related, family problems, disengagement, and other contextual factors. Interpretation does not make clear rules unnecessary, but can help to make the application of rules more proportionate and educationally constructive.

The results also corroborate studies that have correlated emotional intelligence with classroom management and teaching effectiveness. Valente et al., (2019, 2020) found an association between teachers' emotional intelligence, classroom discipline management, teachers' efficacy, and

classroom management. Furthermore, Kgosiemang and Khoza (2022) found that there was a relationship between emotional intelligence and performance in the classroom setting. The present study builds on this literature by separating social and non-social awareness from the concept of EI as a single, undifferentiated construct. This distinction is important because a teacher can have general emotional competence and be very different in terms of their capacity to interpret and respond to the emotional context and others.

In addition, there is evidence of the organisational-awareness dimension in the high scores for the school-wide norms for behaviour and social norms and for being aware of the school policies and initiatives. This is in line with Goleman's argument that social awareness involves understanding the emotional currents and structures in an organisation. Institutional systems shape teachers' activities, and implementation of different aspects of their work is partly a function of their skills in integrating their classroom decisions with the school's expectations and being sensitive to the views of the learners and colleagues. Leithwood et al. (2020) also stress the role of leadership and the environment of the school in effective schools. Therefore, it is important to consider social awareness as an attribute not only individual but also within institutional relationships.

This is reinforced by the qualitative evidence. School leaders said social awareness means demonstrating empathy, communicating, being sensitive towards social, economic and psychological issues, and being sensitive to the emotional environment of the staffroom. The accounts indicate that the impact of social awareness on performance could be on several levels: trust in the learner, conflict management, disciplinary fairness, peer collaboration, and early detection of delegates' problems. The qualitative evidence thus adds to, and does not supplant the regression finding, and provides a means for visualizing the abstract EI competency in everyday school practice.

Results are also consistent with results from other sectors. Mwithi et al. (2016) discovered that social-awareness leadership competency is positively and significantly related to state-corporation performance in Kenya, and Mwanja (2023) indicated that managers' social awareness is positively related to their leadership performance. For this reason, Fubara (2020) found positive and significant relationship between social awareness and organisational innovativeness in Nigeria. The current study replicates this trend by examining the performance of public secondary schools, where interpersonal relations between teachers, learners, school leaders, parents, and community have a significant impact on performance.

However, the findings have to be considered in conjunction with evidence that teacher performance is multidimensional. Kanya et al. (2021) outline several factors that impact teacher performance, and even in low-achieving school contexts, there is evidence of variation in teacher performance as shown by Escribano et al. (2024). Performance can be influenced by leadership in school, professional competence, motivation, workload, resources, organisational culture, and behaviour of students. The R^2 of .092 for the present model further confirms this: social awareness

accounts for a small but statistically significant percentage of variation; the majority of the variation is not accounted for by the bivariate model.

One of the key takeaways is that the development of social awareness should not be viewed as a teacher's remedial program. The qualitative evidence indicates that the school leadership create the culture of relationship in which teachers operate. Training principals and deputy principals to recognise staff emotional signals, apply social awareness in using supportive communication and apply fair disciplinary practices, therefore, may make conditions for teachers to apply social awareness more effectively. This is in line with the relational dimension of Goleman's framework and in line with the general school leadership and teacher support literature.

Another useful finding is that students and colleagues do not receive feedback on the relatively low score. The mean value of 4.24 is high, but is the lowest of the reported indicators. This implies that empathy training practices among teachers may not be aligned with their confidence in the practices and that there may be a lack of structured mechanisms to assess teachers' empathy training practices through the eyes of others. There is thus scope for the use of professional learning communities, peer observation, learner voice, mentoring and reflective feedback to support EI training. These would increase social awareness's observability, developmental and accountability rather than depending on self-perception.

In general, the findings confirm the theoretical hypothesis that social awareness is a significant interpersonal competence of a teacher. It also brings in contextual evidence from Machakos County where a number of competing factors such as classroom management, learner welfare, discipline and coordination for the entire school involve teachers working in complex social settings. However, the cross-sectional design and use of self-reported measures precludes causal interpretation. It is important to note that the evidence is more in the direction of a statistically significant positive correlation, not necessarily that raising teacher awareness of social issues will lead to a corresponding increase in teacher performance.

6. Conclusion

The study indicates that social awareness has a positive and significant relationship with teachers' performance in public secondary schools of Machakos County. The composite mean for teachers' socially aware practice was 4.30 (SD = 0.47), indicating high levels of socially aware practice. The greatest empathy demonstrated was for learners who are stressed or anxious, and the comparatively weaker area was feedback from students and colleagues. Based on regression analysis, social awareness accounted for 9.16% of the variance in teacher performance with the reported social-awareness coefficient being positive ($\beta = 0.0201$) and statistically significant ($p = .0404$). The null hypothesis was thus rejected.

6.1 Theoretical implications

The findings support Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory by showing that social awareness, as a distinct Emotional Intelligence (EI) factor, is related to a significant professional outcome. The findings also confirm the role of empathy, organizational awareness and service orientation as important components of relational work in schools. However, the low R^2 suggests that EI should be viewed as one factor in a multiple-factor theory, as teacher performance is likely to be affected by several factors. Pedagogy, leadership, resources, motivation, workload, school culture, and the students all affect the performance of a teacher.

6.2 Practical implications

For school principals, the findings advocate the inclusion of social awareness components within teacher-development training programs, as opposed to a focus exclusively on technical skills of pedagogy. Aspects of social awareness that could be fostered through training programs include, empathic listening, understanding of learners, stakeholder communication, disciplining of students in a sensitive manner, awareness of the prevailing social-order, offering critical feedback among others. Schools can create opportunities whereby teachers receive information about the interpersonal and classroom management skills they employ, through peer feedback, and/or mentoring programs.

For teacher-development facilitators, and education managers, social awareness should be offered as a component of ongoing professional development, and leadership development programs. EI should not be offered as a generalized soft-skill, as this detaches it from the realities of the workplace and teaching practice. Relying on case studies based in schools, and learning difficulties coupled with disputes in the staff room and/or among the parents coupled with disciplinary issues would help appreciate the role of emotions in professional practice.

6.3 Recommendations

Continuous Professional Development Programs for social skills in public secondary schools must include components for social awareness as well as empathy, and organizational and service awareness. Constructive Criticism must also be included.

Principals and deputies must promote psychologically safe schools where teachers and learners can report challenges they experience without fear of humiliation or major punishment.

Organized and structured feedback systems must include peer and mentor observations, relevant learner feedback, and reflective discussions. Social awareness must be included in teacher-support interventions that recognize the reciprocal relationship of school social relations by developing social awareness for both school leaders and classroom teachers.

Education policymakers must ensure that the integration of relational and emotional competencies in teacher-support systems does not displace the development of pedagogy and subject-related expertise.

6.4 Limitations and future research

Due to the design adopted (cross-sectional), one cannot make conclusive statements about causality. Additionally, self-reported Likert measurements may lead to bias, either method bias or social desirability bias. The scope and generalizability of the findings are restricted to public secondary schools in Machakos County, Kenya.

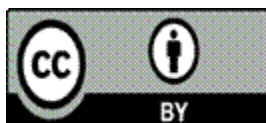
Future studies may adopt a longitudinal or multilevel approach to distinguish teacher, classroom, and school levels. It may also combine self-reported teacher measurements with classroom observations, assessments of the learners, appraisal records and ratings of peers or supervisors. It may also consider the social awareness and the relationships between school leadership, the wellbeing of teachers, climate of the classroom and students' outcomes. Replication of the study in other Counties and with other types of schools in Kenya would give more generalized findings.

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