

Attitude Assessment Of Sighted Pupils Towards Visually Impaired Peers In Integrated Primary Schools. A Case Of Nakuru

Jotham K. Wanjohi

Egerton University,
Kenya

Abstract: The study assessed the attitude of 94 and 91 sighted girls and boys towards their visually impaired peers in integrated schools. Stratified random selection of subjects was used. A likert scale questionnaire was used to measure their attitude.

There was perceptual differences between younger and older pupils towards visually impaired peers in integrated schools. Integration of visually impaired pupils should start early.

I. INTRODUCTION

I assessed the effect of age on the attitude of sighted pupils towards their visually impaired peers in integrated primary schools. Measurement of attitude of sighted pupils confirmed their differential perception of visually impaired peers in integrated schools due to the sighted pupils' age.

Age difference existing between children may affect the quality and quantity of their interactions even when they are well acquainted, and bullying of younger peer can appear as well as rejection by own peers (Ratrup, 1983). Friendship and social interaction become better and stable with age: 2-3 year children old flirt with different playmates, while five years olds are faithful to one or two peers sometime (Brierman and Furman, 1984). This is because younger children are less differentiated in their perceptions of peer's behavior than are older children. Coie and Pennington (1976), and younger, (1985, 1986) found that fourth and seventh graders were not differentiated in their social perception of their peers than first graders. This is because their social awareness increases with age. As a child grows he/she becomes more aware of people (Kransor, 1986; Shantz, 1985) while younger children have more difficulty in social interaction. Due to the above, younger non-handicapped children have been found to have less negative attitude towards their peers than older ones (Turnbul and Blancher-Dixon, 1981) and that is why they are more nurturing than older ones towards the hearing impaired. Other studies indicate that as non-handicapped children

mature, they increase unfavorably their attitude towards their physically handicapped peers (Connor, 1971). This contrasts with Lowen (1974) who found that young and non-handicapped children usually accept their visually impaired schoolmates easily though after some initial curiosity. As the non-handicapped children mature, they are supposed to adjust to the norms of their societies; hence this study endeavors to establish sighted children's attitudes towards their visually impaired peers in integrated schools. This is important if the Kenya Integrated Education Programme is to succeed.

II. METHODOLOGY

In the study there were nine primary schools with at least one visually impaired pupil in the sample. The sample size of 261 was distributed as follows, 16 visually impaired pupils (10 boys and 6 girls), 12 parents of visually impaired children, 48 teachers of visually impaired pupils, and 185 sighted pupils in nine integrated schools. This is considered a fair representation of the total population (Kathuri & pals, 1993; et al; 1996; Mugenda, 1999). Both probability and non probability sampling procedures were applied to select the study sample

Sighted pupils	185
Teachers	48
Visually impaired pupils	16
Parents of visually impaired pupils	12

Total	261
-------	-----

Table 1: Distribution of the study sample by categories of respondents

The guiding factor in selecting a school was availability of schools with visually impaired children according to the Ministry of Education.

Probability sampling involves selecting a reasonable number of subjects that is a true representative of the target population. This gives all elements in the population an equal chance of being included in the final study sample. Two hundred (200) sighted boys and girls were targeted but only 185 correctly filled the questionnaire. They were selected using the systematic random sampling procedure using the class registers. Approximately 94 girls and 91 boys constituted the final tally of the study sample. Non probability sampling was used to select 16 visually impaired pupils, 12 parents of the visually impaired while all teachers (48) who taught any integrated classroom was selected. All the schools in the sample were selected on the basis of having at least one visually impaired pupil.

This research instrument on attitude of sighted pupils was a five point likert type questionnaire which had 40 items. All the items were on attitude towards the visually impaired. The instrument had been piloted before the final use and its validity and reliability was determined. Its Cronbach alpha correlation was 0.81 which was considered high.

III. RESULTS

Age	N	%
9-12	75	40.5
13-17	110	49.5
TOTAL	185	100

Table 2: Distribution of Sighted Pupils by Age

Table 2 shows that sighted pupils of age bracket 9-12 years were 40.5 percent of all sighted pupils, while age 13-17 years comprised the majority at 49.5 percent. Sighted children aged 9-12 years were considered young while those between 13-17 years were considered old in this study.

Difference of younger and older sighted pupils towards integration

Age Group	No.	Mean attitude	T.Value	P. Value(2tailed)
9-12	75	17.28	-2.241	0.026
13-17	110	175.21		

Table 3

IV. DISCUSSION

The objective of this hypothesis was to find out if sighted pupil's age influences their attitude towards their visually impaired peers. Learners aged 9-12 years were categorized as young while those age 13-17 years were categorized as old.

Since obtained P value was 0.026 and it was less than the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a likelihood of younger children rejected their visually impaired more than older sighted children in integrated schools.

During integration, age should be considered, because peer influence increase with age. In implementing Kenya

integrated education programme pupils age was not considered and this may bring problems though integration should start as early as possible.

Hartup (1983) argued that observations have confirmed that the age differences existing between children may affect the quality and quantity of their interactions even when they are well acquainted. Younger children appear to enjoy and accommodate successfully the demands of cross-age interaction and older children in such situations console, entertain, and help care for younger classmates. Children with young siblings seem to be more helpful.

This was contradicted by Thurnbull and Dixon (1981) finding that younger non handicapped children have been found to have less negative attitude towards their peers than older ones. However, Coie and Pennington (1976) and Younger et al (1985) found that fourth and seventh graders were more differentiated in their social perception of their peers than first graders. Their explanation was that, children gain social awareness with increasing age. Krason (1986), Shantz and Shantz (1985) in support of this position, reported that younger children have more difficulty in social interactions.

As a child grows, he/she becomes more aware of people (Dave, 1934; Rubin & Kransor, 1986, Shantz & Shantz, (1985) and entering a group, older children have been observed to engaged in more positive reciprocity with group members than do younger children (Dodge, 1986) who have more difficulty in social interactions which becomes more defined with age (Bierman & Furman, 1985; Horrocks & Bucker, 1995). Asher and Dodge (1995) differed with this position and argued that the age level at which social cognition begins to predict sociometric status is not known. However, York, Heal and Schneider (1986) found that older children were more tolerant of students with disabilities than were younger students.

Bennet and Cass (1989) found that the quality of academic integration differed between those transferring at 11 and 14 years respectively. The latter fared less well, both ending up at the bottom of the entertainment pile. They explained that pupil grows older; he/she may acquire more personal-social problems like being tense, shy, slow and unprepared for lessons.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bennet, N. & Cass, A. (1989). From special to ordinary schools. Southampton; Camelot Press.
- [2] Daven, L. & Schnorr. (1991). Public schools welcome student with disabilities as full members. Educating Exceptional Children. 48-53.
- [3] Erwin, E. J. (1991). Guidelines for integrating young children with visual impairment in General Education settings,. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness , 85, 253-260.
- [4] Glass, e. a. (1982). Teaching Exception Students in the classroom. Boston Little Broom & Co .
- [5] Hefziba, e. (2007). Self concept, adjustment to blindness, and quality of friendship among adolescent with visual

impairments. Journal of visual impairment & blindness

Hollywood, T. etal, (1994).

IJIRAS