

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

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Abstract: *The attitude of 94 and 91 sighted girls & boys towards their visually impaired peers in integrated schools. Stratified random selection of pupils was used to measure their attitude. There was no perceptual difference between girls & boys towards their visually impaired peers in integrated schools. Integration for boys & girls should continue.*

I. INTRODUCTION

From the age of 3 years, children interact more frequently with members of their own but there are serious barriers to opposite sex friendships (Newman, 1982). Stereotypes about men and women are remarkably enduring; consequently society has more favorable behaviors towards men than towards women (Cross & Markus, 1993; Geiss, 1993). Across the world, men are perceived as more nurturing and (Williams 1986).

Children learn gender identity and role in much the same way they learn other things. Gender role, is learnt through provisions of sanctions and renewed by others. Kessler and McKenna (1984) found out that boys were quick to reject their handicapped peers than girls (Goodman, 1972). Kershaw (1973) explained this in terms of the boy's involvement in games where competence in games enhances one's social status. Those who are not competent are not easily accepted in social groups. In school, acceptance or rejection of child depends on gender. Those who are different are rejected (Putallaz and Guttman, 1981). A visually handicapped boy is limited in vision, thus their acceptance by sighted boys in class and out of class activities is low.

Curtis (1985) found that females were consistently favoring their handicapped peers. Shantz and Shantz (1985) explained this in terms of girls being more polite and more concerned with personal control and more accommodative (Forbes, 1982). Females also seek intimate friendship sooner than males. They are also more emphatic because they are better at reading others' non-verbal cues (Eisenberg and Lenon, 1983; Hall, 1987). So both males and females turn

to females for intimacy and understanding. Though popular children receive, more visual attention from peers (Rubin, 1982 and Vaughn & Waitress, 1981, 1981) than unpopular ones, Butler (1984) did not find sex of the perceiver to greatly influence this process. A study conducted by Masakhwe and Anambo (1999) on discrimination against the disabled females in Kenya showed that in education, many families will educate the able bodied boy first, then able bodied girls and if there is money left, then the disabled boy and lastly the disabled girl. This study helped us understand the role of gender in the success of the integrated education programme.

II. METHODOLOGY

In the study, there were 9 integrated primary schools which had at least one visually impaired pupil integrated. There were 10 boys and 6 girls who were visually impaired, while 94 girls and 91 boys who were sighted in the sample. They were selected using systematic random method.

The research tool for measuring the attitude of sighted pupils had 40 items. Collected data (attitude) was analyzed using SSP.

III. RESULTS

The objective of this phase of the study intended to establish whether gender of sighted pupils influenced their attitude towards visually impaired pupils in integrated schools. Results obtained indicate that there was no statistically

significant difference between girls and boys in their attitude towards visually impaired pupils in integrated schools.

Differences between sighted girls and boys towards visually impaired pupils.

Gender	Frequency	%
Girls	94	54
Boys	91	49
Total	185	100

Table 1

Table 1 shows that there were slightly more girls (51 percent) than boys who were 49 percent of the sample.

Difference between sighted girls and boys in their attitude towards visually impaired pupils in integrated schools

Gender	No	Mean attitude	Mean difference	T. Value	P. Value (2 tailed)
Girls	94	172.85	-0.73	-0.334	0.739
Boys	91	173.58			

Table 2

This hypothesis was stated that there was no statistical difference between sighted girls and boys in their attitude towards integration of visually impaired pupils. T-test results indicate that boys and girls did not differ in their attitude towards visually impaired pupils in their attitude towards integration. Since the obtained P was greater than 0.05 for T-test. Null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there was no statistically significant difference between sighted boys and girls in their attitude towards visually impaired peers in an integrated classroom, this suggests that both boys and girls have almost similar attitudes towards visually impaired peers in integrated schools.

IV. DISCUSSION

From the age of 3 years, children interact more frequently with members of their own sex and express verbal performance for them. Rejection of the opposite-sex occurs and avoidance of the opposite sex peer is a salient feature of the social organization. In middle childhood, friendship between males and females may have beneficial and satisfying consequences, but there are serious barriers to opposite sex friendship (New, 1982).

Putallaz and Gottman 1981 b, in their study of entry behaviours among familiar peers whether popular or unpopular, found that all children irrespective of gender were accepted, rejected or ignored by the group at some point during their entry attempt. Though popular children receive more visual attention from peers (Rubin, 1981) than unpopular ones, Buttler (1984) did not find the sex of the perceiver to greatly influence this process. The finding contrasts with Charles. Wirth and La Fencere (1983) who observed that when in competition boys are better than girls and they spend more time in the bystander position. This suggests that when comparing boys and girls in any issue, boys appear more aggressive because they are more power assertive (Maccoby, 1990) while girls are more polite, concerned with personal control (Shantz & Shantz, 1985), and more accommodative (Forbes, 1982). This is perhaps why girls are even more rejected in entering groups than boys. Evaluation bias is made on the basis of gender (Ahs more, 1981; Taylor 1981, Martin

1981). Boys are more likely than girls to be rejected (Coie, Dodge & Copotelli, 1984) when they reported that girls are more accepting to learners with disabilities than boys. Females are more socially accepted than nurturing, compared to males.

Sighted girls and boys did not think that visually impaired pupils waste their class time when the latter seek assistance. This was evident from the 89.2 percent of sighted pupils when they were asked whether visually impaired pupils waste their class time as compared to 9.1 percent of the sample who felt the visually impaired pupils actually waste their class time. This could be through reading, packing and unpacking among other academic activities. About 93.6 percent of sighted pupils reported that their own non class time was not wasted by impaired pupils. In regular classrooms girls and boys sit to one another whether they are sighted or virtually. Upon sitting next to one another, the likelihood of sighted and visually impaired pupils coming into contact is very high hence touching one another. There are no hard feelings between these two groups of learners and this is why, games and players contribute to socializing of either girls or boys in integrated classrooms. When sighted pupils were asked whether they played with visually impaired peers while 11.3 percent did not play or would not want to play at all.

Jackson et al (1991) made the same observation that play provides children with opportunities for developing mastery and competence in cognitive, social and physical skills. Games played in this study included javelin, football, hide and seek running and circles. Sighted pupils irrespective of gender greeted visually impaired pupils regularly as majority 92.4 percent) of the sighted pupils reported. Very few pupils did not greet the visually impaired peers as 2.1 percent of the sample indicated. On the same issue 5.4 percent of the sighted pupils could not remember greeting the visually impaired pupils in integrated schools.

Earlier studies by York (1992) reported that non disabled peers have emerged as some of the best problem solvers and supporters for achieving the successful integration of students with disabilities. Classmates can be involved in identifying important age appropriate and socially valid activities in which their peers with disabilities should participate (Forest & Lusthus, 1987 & Vander cook, York & Forest, 1989). Friendship and social integration of visually impaired pupils are very crucial to visually impaired pupils in their homes and surrounding including the integrated schools.

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