

Differences In Self-Concept Among Low Vision Learners And Those Who Are Totally Blind In Primary Schools, Kenya

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Abstract: Self-concept is one of the most popular ideas in psychological literature. Unfortunately self-concept is also illusive and often poorly defined construct. Terms such as self-concept, self-esteem, self-worth, self-acceptance are often used interchangeably and inconsistently, when they may relate to different ideas about how people view themselves. The Purpose of this study was to determine if learners with low vision had a higher self-concept than those who were totally blind. The population of the study was 291 visually impaired pupils. A sample of 262 respondents was drawn from the population by stratified random sampling technique based on their visual acuity. (189 partially sighted and 73 totally blind). One instrument was used in this study: Pupils' self-concept. Data analysis was done at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance. The data was analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) structure. The study established that there was indeed a difference in self-concept among visually impaired pupils in Kenya. The study therefore recommended that the lower self-concept observed among totally blind pupils should be enhanced by giving counseling and early intervention to those group of pupils with a view to helping them accept their disability.

Keywords: self concept, visually impaired pupils, academic achievement.

A. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Although the sequence of growth and development is essentially the same for the visually impaired and the sighted, some of the developmental tasks are learned more slowly or at a later age by children who are visually impaired (Scholl, 1995). Awareness of the varied objects and persons both near and far, refinement of motor proficiency, locomotion, hand-ear coordination, bonding between mother and child, stimulation of exploration, and establishment of object and person permanence will develop in the child who is visually impaired but gradually. However, adaptations or modifications may be required for maximum development.

The concepts of person's permanence and object permanence are essential for the development of a self-concept. Through person and object permanence, the baby learns to differentiate himself from his parents and from the surrounding environment, he begins unconsciously to comprehend that he is a separate being who can act on the world in which he lives. (Scholl, 1995).

The process of differentiating oneself as a distinct and autonomous being and the process of differentiating objects, animals, persons, or events from each other are more difficult for the child who is congenitally blind. Wallander (2002) studied infants who were congenitally blind and found delays in the establishment of a unique and distinct "I". However with intervention, the child who was born blind performed almost as near as the sighted. Referring to a visually impaired child's acquisition of a body image primarily through tactile and verbal means, Scholl (1995) concluded "these avenues are inferior in providing information concerning his body as compared to the bodies of others. Therefore the formation of a body image is delayed". Jambor and Elliott (2005) developed a body image test for deaf children and found that, with systematic intervention, these lags could be remediated. A good body image is the core of a healthy self-concept, while a poor body image can only result in a distorted self-concept.

There is a direct correlation between feelings about the self. When the body is physically impaired as with blindness, the individual is frequently placed either by himself or by others in an inferior position, viewed as less competent and

adequate. According to Scholl (1995), this causes the individual to strive for superiority by maximizing special abilities as demonstrated for example in musical, athletic, or intellectual achievements. It should be noted that the inferior position is not inherent in blindness, but is frequently the status conferred on the person who is blind.

Scholl (1995) did a longitudinal study of infants who were congenitally visually impaired and found delays in the establishment of a unique and distinct "I". However with intervention, "in those areas of development where comparative data were available, the educationally advantaged infants who were visually impaired came closer to sighted-child ranges than blind-child ranges". This finding was more less the same to a study which was later done by Wallander (2002). In contrast, other studies have suggested that children who are visually impaired are not at more risk of developing low self-concept than sighted counterparts (Alexander, 1996; Griffin-Shirley, Almon, & Kelly, 2007; Pierce & Wardle, 1996). However comparative studies of visually impaired and sighted adolescents found no significant differences in self-concept and established that the relations with friends contribute significantly to the improvement of visually impaired young people's self-concept.

Hurre, Komulainen and Aro (1999) carried out research in India with a sample of 100 adolescents aged between 13 and 14 years (50 females and 50 males, visually impaired and sighted, respectively), the results revealed no differences in the self-concept of both groups. In the same direction Fok and Fung (2004) did a study in the University of Hong Kong in which 115 subjects (52 visually impaired and 63 sighted) participated, the results showed that, in general, both visually impaired and sighted persons present similar levels of self-concept. However Griffin-Shirley and Nes (2005) in their study did not find significant differences between the 71 students with visual impairments and 88 sighted in their levels of self-concept. In Spain, some studies done by Lopez – Justicia, Pichardo and Chacon (2005) reported that visually impaired young persons present lower levels of physical self-concept and are less self-critical than are sighted persons, but no differences were observed in the other dimensions (social, moral, family, and personal). In another study Hurre, Komulainen and Aro (1999) carried out a study with 34 subjects, aged 18 and above, 17 of whom were congenitally visually impaired and 17 were sighted, they found no differences in the global self-concept of both groups. In all the sighted studies, there are contradictory findings and this may be due to the comparison of the impaired against the non impaired, however this study focused on pupils who were all visually impaired except the severity of impairment is what varied.

With regard to other personality traits, Scholl (1995) stated that visually impaired youths manifest some difficulties in their social behaviour, such as more dependence on others, lack of initiative, less aggressiveness, or more anxiety. Some studies have shown a relation between neurotic symptoms and people with some impairment, concluding that behaviour problems in children who are visually impaired and adolescents are mostly the product of external factors such as family environment, institutionalization, sighted peoples' reaction to the visually impaired.

In another study carried by Lopez –Justicia, Pichardo and Chacon (2005) with a sample of 100 students in a school for the visually impaired (59 males and 41 females, males' mean age 17.3 years, and women's 19 years), some of them displayed neurotic characteristics, Specifically, 27 students (11 males and 16 females) had developed a complete neurotic clinical syndrome. The youngest pupil was 9 years old, and the oldest 30. The symptoms presented were: excessive anxiety, palpitations, sweating palms, trembling, insomnia, headaches. The women had twice the percentage of neuroticism as the men (39% against 18.6%). In a study of the Institute of Technology of Finland Hurre and Aro (2000) in a sample of 79 visually impaired adolescents from 18 to 21 years of age, analyzed the relations between socio-emotional adjustment and several personality variables. The results revealed that socio- emotional adjustment correlated significantly and negatively with stress, behaviour problems, withdrawal behaviours, and lack of attention, and positively with self –concept.

From the foregoing review, it is worth noting that very few studies have been done in Africa and more so Kenya, again most studies by researchers like Wallander (2002), Fok and Fung (2004), had very few respondents as compared to this study with 291 respondents, Their studies was done in one setting while this study focused on different programmes.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As noted in the background to the study, placement for learners who are visually impaired has been done haphazardly without any consideration to their self-concept and all decisions made have been based on the opinions of the assessment teacher. As a result, the school dropout is high among this group of learners. While the Government is providing Free Primary Education for all Kenyan children, lack of clear guidelines for programme placement for learners who are visually impaired is not in place and this makes them to take long before being admitted in school. Therefore early stimulation for their self-concept is delayed. There has been no studies done to evaluate to what extent the programme placement enhances self-concept and academic achievement among these pupils. This study therefore evaluated programme placement for learners with visual impairment in relation to self-concept and academic achievement in special primary schools in Kenya so as to establish their abilities for effective educational provision.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Purpose of this study was to determine if learners with low vision had a higher self-concept than those who were totally blind.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Specific objectives of the study was to: determine if learners with low vision had a higher self-concept than those who were totally blind.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The study was based on the following research hypothesis:

Learners with low vision do not have a higher self-concept than those who are totally blind.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study assumed that:

- ✓ learners who are visually impaired needed conducive environment to enhance their self concept;
- ✓ academic achievement was directly proportional to self-concept;

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was done within the schools for learners who are visually impaired in Kenya. These included special schools, inclusive, and integrated programmes for learners who are visually impaired as coordinated by itinerant teachers in the districts where the programmes are active. Special schools for learners who are visually impaired were St. Oda school for the visually impaired, Kibos school for the visually impaired, the Salvation Army primary school for the visually impaired, Thika. St. Francis school for the visually impaired, Kapenguria, Likoni school for the visually impaired, Mombasa and St. Lucy school for the visually impaired, Meru. Integrated programmes included in this study were Kilimani Integrated programme, Kajiado Integrated programme and Kitui Integrated programme. This study used Oriang inclusive education project in Nyanza province.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Findings of this study may have been influenced by possible unreliability of researcher made tools which was used as a measure of pupils' achievement scores. Lack of control of extraneous factors which might have contributed to the performance of pupils such as intelligence and school environment may have caused limitations. The researcher, in a bid to reduce the above stated limitations, therefore used each respondent to act as his or her own control. The test was done on the same day to avoid history or maturation effect.

- ✓ to obtain evidence to rally opposition for a programme,
- ✓ to contribute to the understanding of basic psychological, social and other processes.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this research a survey and a correlation design was used. The main objective was to evaluate visually impaired pupils' programme placement in relation to self-concept and achievement in special education primary schools in Kenya. In this study the intervening effects of sex and visual impairment relationship was of interest, since the independent variable had occurred already. Independent variables were academic self-concept, sex and visual impairment. The dependent variable was academic achievement. Sex had two levels that is male and female, visual impairment, two levels

namely low vision and totally blind. Academic self-concept also had two levels; that is high achievers and low achievers. Using different categories of pupils the survey research design enabled an investigation of the interaction effects of between and within of sex, academic self-concept and achievement.

STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in special school programme for visually impaired pupils, integrated school programme for the blind and an inclusive programme in Kenya. In Kenya there are six special school programmes for primary pupils which are distributed almost equally in all the provinces in Kenya except North Eastern province. These are Kibos, and St. Oda located in Nyanza province, St. Francis in Rift Valley province, St. Lucy in Eastern province, Likoni in Coast province and Thika primary school in Central province. The most established integrated programmes in Kenya are Kajiado in Rift-Valley province, Kitui integrated programme in Eastern province, and Kilimani Integrated programme in Nairobi. There is one inclusive education programme at Oriang' school in Nyanza province. The special schools and integrated schools cater for totally blind and low vision pupils while inclusive programmes cater for all children with and without disabilities. They are all co-education.

STUDY POPULATION

The population of the study consisted of 291 Class eight pupils, of which 210 were partially sighted and 81 totally blind. This number included 168 Class eight pupils in special school programme, 92 pupils of Class eight in integrated programme, 31 pupils in inclusive setting. There were also 43 Class eight teachers and 11 head teachers, all participants were therefore 345.

III. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

A stratified sampling technique was used. The sampling unit consisted of all standard eight pupils in the 6 special schools, 3 integrated programmes and 1 inclusive programme. The pupils were categorized as low vision or totally blind. Low vision pupils were tested for visual acuity using the Snellen chart. The population and sampling frame is shown in table 1.

RESPONDENTS	POPULATION	SAMPLE	PERCENT
Class 8 Pupils	291	262	90.0
TOTAL	291	262	90.0

Table 1: The Population and Sample Frame.

- The following was the selection criteria for the pupils:
- ✓ those aged twelve years and above at the onset of the study;
 - ✓ consent from parent/guardian;
 - ✓ child willingness to participate in the study;
 - ✓ visual acuity of 20/200 or less with a correction of glasses in the better eye.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Instrument that was used to collect data was pupils' questionnaire for academic self-concept. The instrument is described below.

PUPILS' ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT QUESTIONNAIRE

This was defined as the Student's Self Description Questionnaire Individual evaluation tool (SDQI) measuring various domains of academic competence. The three facets of self-concept: general, academic and subject specifics were measured by Shavelson Evaluation Model Instrument (Shavelson, 1990). The instrument consisted of fifty items, which required the respondent to tick or mark the appropriate answer. Each item used a 5-point likert type scale format that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree, indicating the extent to which the respondent agreed or disagreed with self-descriptive statements related to their academic competence. With the realization that this instrument had not been used so far, for pupils who are blind, a pilot study was done in order to identify and change those items that could appear to be unclear or difficult for the pupils to answer. The self-concept was therefore measured by percentage scores.

According to Shavelson (1990), this test is easy to administer, self-explanatory and can easily be understood by pupils of all grades. A score of strongly agree was marked 5 and strongly disagree marked 1. In some items, this was reversed to avoid dishonesty in answers given. The results were then standardized to z-scores using $T = (10z + 50)$. The total score was marked 100 and any score of fifty and above was considered high (L1) and below fifty considered low (L2). Psychometric properties relative to the multi component have revealed predictive validity co-efficient of 0.68 (grade 5) and 0.72 (grade 11), test re-test reliabilities of 0.64 (grade 5) and 0.72 (grade 11) over a 2 week lag. And Kuder Richardson 20 internal consistency reliabilities of 0.59 and 0.66 for grades 5 and 11 respectively (Shavelson, 1990). The pupils Questionnaire on Self-concept is attached as appendix D in print and appendix G in Braille.

VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

According to Shavelson (1990), Psychometric properties relative to the multi component have revealed predictive validity co-efficient of 0.68 (grade 5) and 0.72 (grade 11) for the self-concept instruments. For face validity, all instruments were given to three experts in the area of study to establish if they captured what the study was intended to do. The instruments were then corrected by incorporating the views of these experts.

RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

A pilot study was undertaken in one of the schools not included in the study and this included 29 pupils of which 18 were totally blind and 11 had low vision. These children had a wide range of abilities and visual impairments, and were of the same age range and from similar background as those that were used in the study. After the pilot study it was possible to

determine which researcher made items pupils answered with ease and which ones they found confusing. The items found confusing were restructured to reduce the ambiguity and therefore enhanced the suitability and reliability of the study. Split-half approach was then employed in order to establish the level of reliability which was computed using Pearson's Product Moment method. A correlation coefficient (r) of 0.787 was found for self-concept.

The questionnaire used was designed on a 5 points likert scale. A score of strongly agree was marked 4, agree 3 and strongly disagree; 1, while disagree was marked 2 those who scored undecided were awarded 0. In some items this was reversed to avoid dishonesty in answers given. The total score was marked 100 and any score of 50 and above was considered high and below fifty considered low. For analysis purposes, responses at points 4 and 3 were considered positive and therefore grouped as agreed while those at points 1 and 2 were considered negative responses and grouped as disagreed.

DATA ANALYSIS

All procedures based on the analyses of variance structure were conducted. In order to facilitate interpretation, negative items were reversed such that high scores represented high positive perception. On the basis of these analyses, latent correlation: on academic self-concept and achievement was tested. Academic self-concept was described best by three factors (general self-concept, academic and subject specific). A score of fifty out of one hundred for Self-concept was considered a pass, while a score below fifty failed. For achievement scores the pass mark was also fifty out of one hundred, any score below fifty was considered as fail. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to establish the relationship between Self-concept and achievement scores. The mean and standard deviation was used to indicate how widely spread values are from the mean. Data analyses at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance were tested. F test was used to test the statistical significance of the postulated null hypotheses. Simple frequencies and percentages were calculated to enable an investigation of comparison on the responses of various groups for each question or item. Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) was used to measure the interaction effect of the dependent and independent variables.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the study results obtained through an interactive process of data collection and analysis involving both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data analysis and interpretation was based on the following objective

- ✓ find out if pupils with low vision had a higher self-concept than totally blind pupils.

DETERMINING IF LOW VISION PUPILS HAVE A HIGHER SELF-CONCEPT THAN TOTALLY BLIND PUPILS

The study attempted to determine if there was any significant difference in self-concept among visually impaired pupils by testing the hypothesis below.

H₀₁ Low vision pupils do not have a higher self-concept than totally blind pupils

The scores were tabulated, analyzed and rated as shown on the table below.

Self-concept Scores	Low Vision	Totally Blind	Total
10-19	0	2	2
20-29	8	2	10
30-39	12	4	16
40-49	21	10	31
50-59	34	8	42
60-69	32	19	51
70-79	53	11	64
80-89	21	15	36
90-99	8	2	10
Total	189	73	262

Table 2: Comparison of Pupils Self-concept Scores with Degree of Impairment

From the table, low vision pupils were 189 and totally blind pupils were 73. Results showed that the computed mean scores of the pupils based on their level of visual impairment; partially impaired pupils had higher mean score (66.61) compared to pupils who were totally blind who had a mean score of 60.32. The computed standard deviation (sd) for partially impaired was 1.8 while the calculated standard deviation (sd) for the totally blind was 2.06. The calculated value on Pearson's r also showed that partially sighted pupils scored 0.627 and those who were totally blind scored 0.537. A look at the table for critical value for $p \leq 0.05$ and $p \leq 0.01$, for partially sighted pupils was (0.195) and (0.254) respectively. Pupils who were totally blind had a critical value of 0.232 at $p \leq 0.05$ and 0.302 at $p \leq 0.01$, therefore taking the calculated value of 0.627 for the partially sighted, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The results showed that low vision pupils had a higher self-concept than totally blind pupils.

This result can be summarized on the table below:

SOURCE	Sample n	\bar{x}	df.	Calc. Value	C.V.
Partially Sighted	189	66.1	187	0.627	0.195/0.154
Totally Blind	73	60.32	71	0.537	0.232/0.302
Total	262				

Table 3: Mean and significance of self-concept of visually impaired pupils

Results of the study showed that low vision pupils scored higher in self-concept than pupils who were totally blind. This is in support with the study done by Kamau, (1986), which indicated that there was significant differences in educational aspirations across disability type. Two relevant issues in relationship between self-concept and other psychological disorders, conditions, or disabilities are the causative dimension of self-concept problems and the generality or specificity of the self views. Although some models have been proposed by Hattie, (1992) that suggested directionality between global self-worth and other psychological variables, however, this issue remains largely unresolved. When self-concept problems are apparent and coexist with another

disorder, disability, or problems, it may be difficult to determine whether diminished self-concept is a result of the disorder or caused by the disorder.

Hattie, (1992) observes that self-concept problems are reactive in individuals with disabilities. Therefore when pupils with visual impairment are also faced with self-perceptions of academic difficulties they too react. The second issue addresses the generality versus specificity of self-concept problems. Although self-concept is multidimensional and many scales assessing self-concept may be realistic reflection of some personal situation or condition. Marsh, (2002), in a meta-analysis of self-reported personality characteristics showed more deviance from the norm than trends on global measures. This finding is not surprising since loss of vision is an inherent to failure in environmental adjustment. Similarly, Dunn, (1982) discussed the role of body image and physical limitations among persons with visual impairment. Therefore, it would not be surprising for individuals with visual impairment to show indexed of self-concept problems in body image areas. Therefore more specific self-concept problems need to be viewed in the context of the other conditions and disorders, and their overall contribution to more global self-concept needs to be assessed.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the evaluation of placement programme for visually impaired pupils in relation to self-concept and achievement in special education primary schools in Kenya. The study was guided by the following research objectives:

- ✓ find out if pupils with low vision had a higher self-concept than the totally blind pupils.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

- The findings of the study included the following:
- ✓ Low vision pupils were found to have scored higher in self-concept test than their totally blind counterparts.

CONCLUSION

This chapter attempted to make conclusions based on the findings of the study in order to answer research hypotheses.

H₀₁ Low vision pupils do not have a higher self-concept than pupils who are totally blind

Since low vision pupils showed a higher self-concept than pupils who are totally blind, it may be concluded that self-concept depends to a certain degree on the extent of the disorder. That is, the greater the disorder, the lower the self-concept.

RECOMMENDATION

A number of questions have been raised in this study. Consequently, the following recommendations are suggested.

- ✓ The lower self-concept observed among totally blind pupils should be enhanced by giving counseling and early intervention to these group of visually impaired pupils with a view to helping them accept their disability. Early intervention will expose visually impaired children to an enriched language environment and this might help to improve their self-concept. This statement is also supported by Murugambi (2003) when she recommended further research on communication competence for learners who are blind.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study finally made the following suggestions for further research:

The problems associated with self-concept research, including the definition and measurement of self-concept, initially might appear to be insurmountable. This is not to suggest that educators abandon research in this area. Rather, in designing future research regarding pupils self- concept and achievement, one must be aware of the difficulties inherent in the process.

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