



**TEACHERS' ATTITUDE AND ITS EFFECT
ON PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH AMONG LEARNERS
WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN SELECTED
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

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Abstract:

Specifically, the study aimed at determining the attitude of teachers toward learners with MID in selected primary schools in Kiambu County and how it influenced their performance in English. The study employed social constructivist theory to explore the teachers' instructional strategies that had an effect on the English performance of learners with MID in acquiring self-regulation. In this study 31 class six English teachers, 2111 class six learners and 31 school administrators within 3 zones were targeted in the descriptive survey study. A 20% sample was used to sample the learners, while purposeful sampling was used for the teachers and school administrators. The study used a sample of 31 school administrators, 31 teachers and 422 learners, all from the three identified zones. Observation schedules, interview schedules and questionnaires were used to collect data. Piloting was done in Gicharani primary school to enhance the validity of the research instruments while the test and re-test method was used to test the instruments' reliability. Quantitative data questions were analyzed by descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and measures of central tendencies. Findings revealed that the teachers' attitude was positive with some having a negative attitude. The chi-square analysis revealed that the p-value was statistically significant at 0.018 implying that the teachers' attitude towards the learners affected the learners with MID's English performance. The study concludes that the teachers' attitude towards learners with MID had a significant influence on the MID learners' performance in English. The

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study recommends that primary school teachers should be trained on the need for a positive attitude in the classroom towards all the learners, more so those with MID to ensure their participation in class and improved self-esteem.

Keywords: mild intellectual disability, teacher's attitude, special needs education, performance of English

1. Introduction

Intellectual disability involves issues with general mental abilities that affect functioning in two key areas including intellectual function and adaptive functioning (Tassé, Luckasson & Schalock, 2016). Intellectual functioning encompasses learning problem solving and judgment while adaptive functioning entails activities of daily life like communication and independent living (Hansen, 2019)). Due to its difficulty to detect and its widespread effect on learners' overall life, this study takes a toll on Mild Intellectual Disability (MID). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) stated that, approximately 1-2% of the world population had intellectual disability (ID), translating to about 200 million people (Aldersey, 2012). It was most common in third-world countries, whereby about 16 in every 1000 people suffered from the disability (Liao et al., 2013). Further, UNDP estimated that 80% of all people with ID were found in low-income countries, while people with disabilities represented about 10% of the world population (Tenorio, Donoso, Ali & Hassiotis, 2020).

According to American Psychiatric Association (APA) (2019), problems that affect the mental ability affecting intellectual and adaptive functioning are termed intellectual disability (Pinals, Hovermale, Mauch & Anacker, 2022). While children, in general, needed plenty of attention and love from parents and teachers, learners with special needs such as MID required teachers whose personal characteristics effectively enhanced the learning process. In the context of teaching and learning, teachers' characteristics could be described as individual aspects that influence learners' expectation of success, classroom management as well as designing a lesson for mastery of individual learners (Alderman, 2013). According to Martirosyan, Hwang and Wanjohi (2015), English language proficiency among learners has a direct correlation with their academic performance.

In Egypt, about 3.5% of the total population had disabilities, out of whom, 1.5% are children below 15 years were affected by intellectual disability. According to Abdelhameed (2010), there were about 450 schools for learners with disabilities, while those with intellectual disabilities accounted for about 215 of them. According to Adnams (2010), there were about 465 special schools in South Africa and another 715 full-service schools providing education for all types of disabilities. However, due to a lack of coordination across departments, there had been poor academic performance for the learners (South African Federation for Mental Health, 2015). In Uganda, about 21.9% of children with disability suffered from intellectual disabilities (Ndyabawe, 2016). Only 9%

were enrolled in primary and secondary schools, and 66% of these dropped along the way. This was due to incompetent policies, lack of resources and qualified teachers to support learners with mild intellectual disabilities.

In Kenya, intellectual disability accounted for about 2.5% of all disability cases in children (Kahongeh, 2017). Despite the fact that a high number of these cases were registered in schools, the rate at which school dropouts were experienced remained high due to inadequate support services in most learning institutions (Kahongeh, 2017). However, there existed about 73 educational assessment and resource centers which assessed learners and placed them under the regular curriculum with adaptations and or intervention programs such as the individualized Education Program (IEP), or a home and hospital-based program, (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, (KIPPRA, 2018). In Kiambu, statistics on the performance of learners with mild intellectual disability were not available since there were no special schools specifically for learners with MID, furthermore specific examination performance for learners under special education programs was not documented.

Although the government of Kenya had made strides towards this endeavour for instance, by supporting the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE), it remained unclear whether most of the teachers in the primary schools had undergone the required training, hence the development and use of Individualized Education Programme (IEP) remained a riddle in many of these schools. In Kiambu, learners had majorly failed in academic performance, with some school managements fronting them to special schools since they were seen as burdensome. However, the fact that learners with MID continued to perform poorly in both institutional and national examinations in Kiambu County meant that such ideal expectations might not have been considered or might have substantial missing links.

1.3 Specific Objective of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to determine the attitude of teachers toward learners with MID in primary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The guiding theory for the study was the social constructivist theory of self-regulation by Schunk and Zimmerman (2003). The cognitive development theory is the stem of this theory that claims that human beings are motivated intrinsically and are active learners. Self-regulation is considered by social constructivists as the progression of learners with intellectual disabilities: *“acquiring self-belief regarding their competencies and aptitudes, the structure and complexity of learning and how the efforts and strategies can be controlled to meet the academic and personal goals”* (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003). Learners' self-beliefs and educational outcomes are associated with their level of change and development based on the ongoing changes, experiences and progression.

A critical aspect of the constructivism theory is self-regulated processes in learning and development (Paris, Byrnes & Paris, 2001). Therefore, for students with MID, the self-regulated theory of social constructivism is important for providing them with the capacity to control their thoughts, feelings, actions and motivations. This is because the theory emphasizes the self as an influencer of actions, motivation, and emotional reactions to the surrounding. For students with MID, interacting with their teachers and peers can enable them to realize that their understanding of some concepts is not sufficient; hence, he or she has to seek assistance from those with more knowledge.

2.2 Empirical Studies and Knowledge Gaps

The inclusion model records of success in public schools to take care of the needs of special needs had been met by resistance and frustrations by the teachers as noted by Sutton (2013) in a study to determine the attitude of teachers regarding inclusion and how learners with disabilities performed in academics, there was a significant relationship was found between the teachers' attitude and the learners' performance in relation to the support and training received by a teacher. Findings in Zimbabwe showed that favorable and unfavorable feelings towards learners with disabilities significantly affected the learners' educational attainment (Chimhenga, 2014). It was evident that labeling and classifying learners negatively by the teachers led to discrimination of the less intelligent or learners with disabilities which negatively affected the performance of the learner.

Ogero (2016) also came to a similar conclusion in the study whose purpose was to determine the school-based factors influencing the performance of children with disabilities in public primary school in Kajiado County which primarily focused on the attitudes of teachers towards children with disabilities. The findings showed that some teachers had a negative attitude towards children with disabilities and had the power to influence the performance of their learners. Cases of labeling learners were found to affect the learners, especially those who were labeled as less intelligent and were de-motivated to work hard. However, this study sought to examine how negative and positive attitudes by teachers towards learners with disabilities affected their academic performance.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

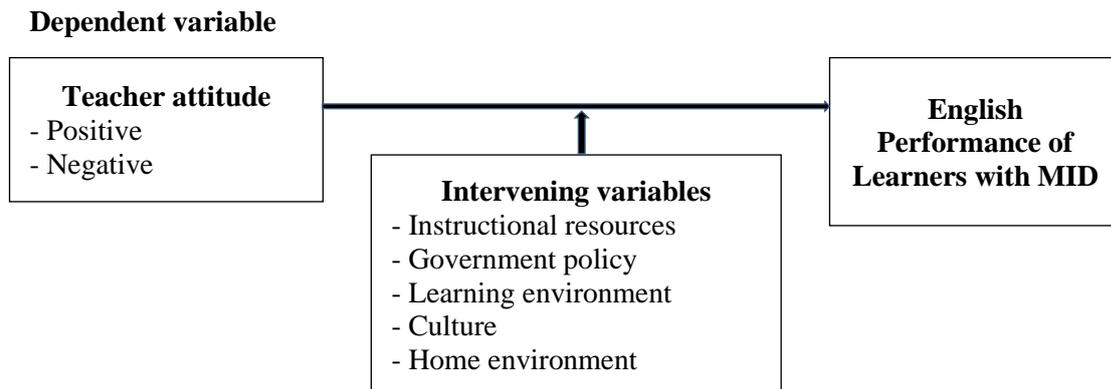


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Target Population

The design of a descriptive survey was employed in this study as it was helpful in obtaining data from diverse targeted groups such as teachers, learners and school administrators. The population targeted in this study consisted of teachers, school administrators, and learners with MID in primary schools in Kiambu County. According to County Education Office (2014), in Kikuyu Sub County there were 3 educational zones with 31 schools, 243 class six English teachers, and 2111 class six learners. The class six learners with MID were targeted because they helped inform the study's problem and provided their performance results.

3.2 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Schools in the sub-county were clustered into zones. From the zones, a random sampling technique was used to pick out six schools from which learners were assessed to get those with MID. From the target population, a representative sample of 20% was obtained. A simple random sample is free from sampling bias as each unit in the population has an equal chance of being selected. Purposeful sampling was done to sample 31 school administrators and 31 class 6 English teachers one from each school. A sample is identified through a sampling procedure, whereby sampling techniques are applied to select a representative sample (Kalof, Dan & Dietz, 2008). In a descriptive survey, a 20%-30% sample is considered more appropriate (Asenahabi, 2019). Therefore, the study used the following sample. The study used a sample of 31 school administrators, 31 teachers, and 422 learners, all from the three identified zones.

3.3 Research Instruments, Validity and Reliability

Observational schedules, interview schedules and questionnaires were used during data collection.

Piloting was done in Gicharani primary school which is in Kikuyu Sub-County Kiambu County. The respondents in the school did not take part in the actual study. The study targeted the school administrators, the class six English teachers and class six

learners with MID making a total of 38 respondents. Observation checklist, the questionnaires and the Assessment Tool for Mild Intellectual Disability to enhance their validity. Necessary changes were made where necessary to remove ambiguity, technicality and irrelevance depending on what was seen in the pilot study. The test-retest method was used whereby retesting was done after two weeks and an average coefficient of 0.76 was established, hence making the instruments reliable and acceptable.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures, Analysis and Presentation

A pre-visit to the target schools was organized and a date for the data collection was set with the agreement of the school administrators. The questionnaires were physically introduced to the sampled respondents in each school and were filled in approximately 45 minutes. At the same time, the researcher filled in the observation checklist while teachers were recruited and trained to help assess the students for MID. Filled questionnaires were then picked up ready for analysis. The researcher also took part in-class sessions as a participant-observer in order to fill the observational checklist. For the questions of a quantitative nature, analysis was done through descriptive statistics (frequency distribution and measures of central tendency). For ease of this process, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to examine associations between specific explanatory variables such as level of education, professional qualification, instructional methods, and experience with academic performance (Wetcher-Hendricks, 2014). Responses to open-ended questions and other data of qualitative nature were coded through content analysis. It was then recorded by the descriptive narrative to depict patterns. From these patterns, the researcher made connections, explained the data, and explained findings in line with the study objectives.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Bio-Data of the Respondents

The following are the general characteristics of the teachers involved in the study.

Table 1: General characteristics of the Respondents

Teachers' characteristic	Detail	Frequency	Percent (%)
Teacher's Gender	Male	9	30.0
	Female	21	70.0
	Total	30	100.0
School Administrators' Gender	Male	16	51.61
	Female	15	48.39
	Total	31	100.0
Teachers' Teaching Experience	0-5 years	3	10.0
	6-10 years	6	20.0
	11-15 years	5	16.67
	≥16 years	16	53.33
	Total	30	100.0
School Administrators Teaching Experience	0-5 years	3	9.68

	6-10 years	6	19.35
	11-15 years	5	16.13
	≥16 years	17	54.84
	Total	31	100.0
Teachers' Highest Professional qualification	Certificate	11	35.48
	Diploma	10	32.26
	Degree	9	29.03
	Masters	1	3.23
	Total	30	100.0
School Administrators' Professional Qualification	Certificate	6	19.35
	Diploma	8	25.81
	Degree	10	32.26
	Masters	7	22.58
	Total	29	100.0
Teachers' SNE Training	Yes	12	40.0
	No	18	60.0
	Total	30	100.0

Table 1 shows that majority of teachers 21(70%) were female while only 9(30%) were male. The respondents' gender was perceived as important for the study because gender influenced how individuals perceive and think about some issues. It could be seen in the figure that the majority of school administrators 16(51.61%) were male while 15(48.39%) were female. The majority of teachers 16(53.33%) indicated that they had more than sixteen years of teaching experience. The majority of the school administrators 17(54.84%) had more than sixteen years of experience in their position while 5(16.13%) had between 11-15 years of experience, 6(19.35%) had between six-ten years and only 3(9.68%) had less than five years of experience. The majority of teachers 18(60%) had no SNE training while 12(40%) indicate that they had been trained in Special Needs Education. The findings implied that most school administrators had some form of SNE training.

4.2 Challenges in Implementation of IEP in Schools for Students with HI

In order to meet the objective, the researcher had a range of questions that sought to establish the attitude of teachers based on the school administrators' views. The school administrators were given a range of questions on a five-Likert scale where (SA=strongly agree, A= agree, UN=undecided, D= disagree and SD=strongly disagree) and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements provided. Their responses were as provided in Table 2.

Table 2: School Administrators' Responses on Teachers' Attitude

Statement	N=31	SA	A	UN	D	S.D
Academic performance for learners with a mild intellectual disability is high.	F	1	8	6	10	6
	%	3.2	25.8	19.4	32.3	19.4
Teachers are encouraged to teach in classes with learners with mild intellectual disabilities.	F	7	14	2	6	2
	%	22.6	45.2	6.5	19.4	6.5
There is a high commitment from teachers when teaching	F	4	14	4	6	3

in classes with learners with mild intellectual disability.	%	12.9	45.2	12.9	19.4	9.7
Teachers pay extra attention when teaching in classes with learners with mild intellectual disabilities.	F	6	12	2	11	0
	%	19.4	38.7	6.5	35.5	0

The responses show that the majority of respondents 12(38.7%) agreed and 6(19 strongly agreed that the teachers pay extra attention when teaching in classes with learners with MID whereas 11 (35.5%) disagreed with the claim while 2(6.5%) were undecided. These findings suggested that the majority of teachers gave the learners with MID extra attention according to the school administrators. As Murungi (2017) argued, where teachers had a positive attitude towards learners, their performance was bound to improve. Further, the table shows that the majority of the school administrators 16(51.7%) disagreed that the academic performance of learners with MID was high while 10(29%) stated that the academic performance of learners with MID was high with 6(19.4%) undecided. These findings suggested that most of the learners with MID did not perform very well in class.

The table also showed that the majority of school administrators 21(67.7%) agreed that teachers were encouraged to teach learners in classes with MID while 2(6.5%) were undecided and 8(25.9%) refuted the assertion. These findings implied that most teachers were encouraged to teach in classes with learners with MID. As Fernández-Rivas and Espada-Mateos (2019) indicate that where teachers are willing to teach in inclusive classrooms, then their positive attitude was bound to improve students' performance.

Lastly, the table also shows that the majority of school administrators 14(45.2%) agreed and 4(12.9%) strongly agreed that there was a high commitment from teachers when teaching in classes with learners with MID while 4(12.9%) were undecided, 6(19.4%) disagreed and 3(9.7%) strongly disagreed that there was a high commitment from teachers when teaching in classes with learners with MID. These findings suggested that teachers teaching students with MID were committed to their work and this was supported by Murungi (2017) who argued that where teachers were committed, they could apt a wide range of teaching strategies to assist learners with disabilities which enhanced the process of learning. The teachers were also asked to indicate their responses to aspects of attitudes and their responses were provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Teachers' Responses on Their Attitude towards Learners with MID

Statement	N=30	SA	A	UN	D	SD
Learners with mild intellectual disability are interactive.	F	4	14	5	5	2
	%	13.3	46.7	16.7	16.7	6.7
During teaching, I ask random questions to test understanding of the subject.	F	9	18	0	3	0
	%	30	60	0	10	0
Learners with mild intellectual disability are intimidated by others in class.	F	6	10	5	8	1
	%	20	16.7	26.7	26.7	3.3
Other learners bear with learners with ID when teaching.	F	2	19	0	8	1
	%	6.7	63.3	0	26.7	3.3

The table showed that the majority of teachers 14(46.7%) agreed, 4(13.3%) strongly agreed that learners with MID were interactive while 5(16.7%) were undecided, disagreed respectively while 2(6.7%) strongly disagreed that the learner with MID was interactive suggesting that learners with MID were interactive. The majority of respondents 18(60%) agreed and 9(30%) strongly agreed that during teaching, they asked random questions to test the MID learners' understanding of the subject whereas 3(10%) disagreed with the assertion. These findings implied that the majority of the teachers asked random questions to determine whether or not the learners had understood the concepts being taught in class. This implied that most teachers were concerned with the students' mastery of subject content which supports the claims by Onivehu, Ohuwuiro and Oyenira (2017) who established that where teachers promote interactive learning, students' comprehension of learning content was enhanced.

These findings implied that generally, learners with ID were intimidated by others in the class. The findings also revealed that the majority of teachers 19(63.3%) agreed, 2(6.7%) strongly agreed while 8(26.7%) disagreed and 1(3.3%) strongly disagreed that other learners bear with learners with MID when teaching. These findings supported those by Hutzler, Meier and Zitomer (2019) who found that a positive attitude by teachers teaching children with disabilities determines the level of inclusiveness in the classroom. As such, having a positive attitude towards learners with disabilities is likely to enhance understanding and care by other students towards the learners with disabilities. The observation checklist was also used to observe the teachers' attitude in class and table 4 shows the results of the observation.

Table 4: Observation Checklist: Teachers' Attitude

Item	Specific Item	N=30	Yes	No
Teacher Attitude	Participation of all learners in the class.	F	7	23
		%	23.3	76.7
	Participation of learners with MID.	F	9	21
		%	30	70
	The teacher asks questions.	F	20	10
		%	66.7	33.3
	Students' willingness to answer questions.	F	13	17
		%	43.3	56.7

The table shows that the majority of learners 23(76.7%) did not participate in class with only 7(23.3%) of the classes observed having all learners participating in class. The table further shows that 9(30%) of the classes observed had learners with MID participating in class while the majority of the classes 21(70%) were characterized by learners not participating in class. Furthermore, the researcher observed that in the majority of the classes 20(66.7%) teachers asked questions with 10(33.3%) of classes being characterized by teachers who did not ask questions. Lastly, the researcher also observed that in most classes 17(56.7%) learners with MID were not willing to answer questions with only 13(43.3%) of classes characterized by learners willing to answer questions. Overall, these

findings showed that in most classes, teachers did ask questions, but learners with MID did not participate in class and were not willing to answer the questions. This was mostly seen as being due to their low self-esteem. According to Ogero (2016), some teachers have a negative attitude toward children with disabilities and this influences the children's self-esteem in a negative way.

Aside from the questionnaires and observations, interviews were conducted with a number of school administrators. The purpose of the interviews was to get more in-depth views on the teachers' attitudes. The school administrators were asked to indicate their teachers' attitudes towards learners with disabilities. The interview findings with selected school administrators further supported the negative attitude observed by the researcher with Admin 1 arguing that the attitude of the teachers was not really positive.

Admin 2 was asked:

"What is the teachers' attitude towards learners with MID in your view?"

The response was:

"The teachers have a negative attitude towards learners with MID...They say that the MID learners lower their mean score and prefer them in special schools."

Overall, this implies that the school administrators perceived their teachers as lacking a positive attitude towards learners with MID.

Admin 4 argued:

"The teachers' attitude is very negative towards those learners and prefers them to be in special units. Moreover, regular teachers find SNE teachers to be like their learners so they do not take advice from teachers with special needs education training."

She further argued:

"The teachers suppress the learners with MID by asking only the bright learners questions and when the learners with MID do not get the questions right, they ridicule them.... The teachers also put cross lines in their books when marking them, while some don't mark their work nor correct them when they are wrong."

These findings implied that the learners with MID were exposed to negative attitudes not only from their teachers but also from other learners which could have a great impact on their self-esteem and overall enjoyment of the school environment as they were secluded, mocked and victimized while also excluded from the mainstream education system (Hutzler, Meier, & Zitomer, 2019). The results were then used to run a chi-square analysis and the findings were as displayed. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5: Chi Square Results: Teachers' Attitude * MID Learners' Performance

Count			MID Learners Performance		P value
			Average	Below Average	
Attitude	Positive	F	8	5	0.018
		%	26.67	16.67	
	Negative	F%	3	14	
		%	10	46.67	

As shown in Table 5, the majority of the learners with average performance were those whose teachers had a positive attitude 8(26.67%) whereas the majority of those whose teachers had a negative attitude 14(46.67%) were those whose performance was below average. These findings implied that the teachers' attitude towards the learners had an impact on the learners with MID's English performance. This was supported by the statistically significant chi-square analysis results where the p value of 0.085 was lower than the present threshold of 95% confidence level.

Therefore, it could be argued that if the teachers failed to interact with the learners by asking questions and encouraging participation among learners including those with MID, then the learners with MID would perform poorly. According to Chimhenga (2014), a significant relationship existed between the teacher's attitude and the learners' performance in relation to the support and training received by a teacher. Overall, the favorable and unfavorable feelings towards learners with disabilities significantly affected the learners' educational attainment (Onivehu, Ohuwuiro, & Oyenira, 2017). It was evident that labeling and classifying learners negatively by the teachers led to discrimination of the less intelligent or learners with disabilities which negatively affected the performance of the learner.

5. Conclusions

This study noted that learners with mild intellectual disability performed dismally not only due to lack of proper instructions but also due to lack of SNE training as well as negative attitude toward them. The study concluded that the teachers' attitude towards learners with MID had a significant influence on the MID learners' performance in English.

6. Recommendations

The study recommended that primary school teachers should be trained on the need for a positive attitude in the classroom towards all the learners, more so those with MID to ensure their participation in class and improved self-esteem.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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