



## INFLUENCE OF THE ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF RONGO SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

**Riwa Norah Anyango,**

**Lazarus Millan Okello<sup>i</sup>**

Department of Educational Psychology and Science,  
Rongo University,  
Kenya

### **Abstract:**

Visual impairment has a negative impact on the learner's ability to learn. In Kenya learners with visual impairment experience problems interacting with the learning environment just like other learners with other forms of impairment. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of the Attitude of Teachers on Academic Performance of Visually Impaired Learners in Primary Schools of Rongo Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya. The study was based on Bandura's (1968) Social Cognitive Theory of learning which outlines the process of learning as a result of the surrounding environment. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The study population included 29 headteachers of public primary schools with the integrated program, 40 Special Needs Education (SNE) Teachers and 5 Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) giving a total of 74 respondents. Purposive and Saturated sampling techniques were used to get a sample size of 29 headteachers, 40 SNE teachers and 5 CSOs. Reliability of research instruments was done through piloting on 4 SNE teachers, 3 headteachers and 1 CSO in UririSub-County. Using the test-retest technique, a reliability index of 0.79 and 0.81 was attained for teachers' and headteachers' questionnaires respectively. The reliability test for the interview schedule was carried out by parallel-form reliability. The content validity of instruments was established by presenting the instruments to an expert for confirmation. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages and means and Inferential statistics of Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Chi-square. Qualitative data was analyzed based on emerging themes generated from the study objective. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Frequency and percentage tables were used to present collected data. The study established that there was a significant relationship between teachers' attitude and teaching learning materials and academic performance at  $p < 0.05$ . Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that teachers' attitude affect academic performance in Integrated Primary Schools in Rongo Sub-County. From

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<sup>i</sup>Correspondence: email [millan15@yahoo.com](mailto:millan15@yahoo.com)

the study it was recommended that teachers handling visually impaired learners should work on their attitude to improve the performance of visually impaired learners; teaching and learning materials that are relevant and appropriate should be made available to visually impaired learners in order to aid their academic performance. Research findings will assist in identifying appropriate teaching methods, teacher training, and a conducive working environment to boost teacher morale and adequate teaching and learning resources.

**Keywords:** attitude, academic performance, visually impaired

## 1. Introduction

Vision plays a critical role in an educational setting. Visual impairment which is severe enough to interfere with progress is considered a visual handicap. Learners must be able to see clearly, focus on objects far and near, be able to coordinate hand and eye, discriminate small differences and remember what they see. Difficulty in these areas poses problems in the classroom for pupils with visual impairment to access learning. Despite the effort of the government in identifying visually impaired learners and integrating them into the public primary school system, their performance in KCPE is consistently poor over the last four years as shown in Table 1. The study, therefore, investigated factors influencing the academic performance of visually impaired learners integrated into public primary schools in Rongo Sub-County.

Globally, the education for visually impaired learners in public primary schools is fundamental to a good national, social and economic outlook. The academic potential of the visually impaired was developed through education which made them contributors to the national as well as global economics like their sighted counterparts (Omede, 2015). Omede further opines that education is important for children because they are the future of the world and should be updated with the current affairs and that Primary education ensures broad-based development of pupils so that all pupils are able to develop to the best of their cognitive, social, emotional, cultural and physical skills, thus preparing them for further school careers. According to Omede (2016), inclusive education concentrates on the learning needs of all children, with special attention on those that are vulnerable to discrimination, marginalization and exclusion. Children with or without disabilities have the same rights to educational opportunities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Simon, 2010).

According to Vaporanya (2014), the provision of general education to all students in their respective classes with high-quality instructions, support and intervention is a key indicator of inclusive education and integrating schools have a collaborative and same school culture where pupils with disabilities face underlying presumptions relating to competence, development of positive social relationships with peers, and are expected to fully participate as members of the school family. This is supported by United Nations

Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) which says that education is a human right for all throughout life and that access must be matched by quality.

United Nations promoted the idea and philosophy of integration education globally by championing Education for All at the world conference on Education For all in Thailand in 1990 and the 1994 Salamanca conference in Spain (Renato, Ji, Mathalie& Anne,2008). Studies in Saudi Arabia indicate that some pupils without disabilities liked the practice of integration education since they felt that pupils with special education needs were able to keep in step with lessons taught in class (Felimban, 2017). On the other hand, Nyambere and Okello (2021) revealed that the availability of Kenyan Sign Language made the most significant contribution to the performance of learners with HI.

## 2. Literature Review

Balal and Rehan (2012) examined the perceptions of teachers and students about curriculum viability inhibitors that are equally important but may differ. The study adopted a mixed-method approach and used valid and reliable questionnaires. The study found out that the curriculum under review had no clear inhibitor in the number of pupils. Qualitative data was collected upon inquiry. However, the study did not use interviews nor show the number of respondents. The current study used both questionnaires and valid and reliable interviews and used a descriptive research design. The study showed the number of schools and the exact number of respondents.

Richard (2010) investigated the effects of class size and adaptive teaching competence on classroom processes and academic outcomes. There were 49 teachers and 898 students. The study adopted a multi-method approach. However, the study used a large number of students. The study adopted a descriptive design. The current study used teachers, curriculum support officers and pupils while employing both questionnaires and interviews.

Dukmak (2013) investigated the attitudes of regular classroom teachers towards including students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Different statistical analyses such as ANOVA and correlations were administered to the study. The study findings reveal that in general, teachers showed positive attitudes towards educational inclusion but male teachers showed more positive attitudes than females did. Adult attitude scale and student checklist were employed. A total of 800 primary teachers were included in the study. However, the study did not use questionnaires and interviews, the study only involved teachers. The current study used both questionnaires and interviews and also involved teachers and a curriculum support officer.

Dawn (2015) investigated the attitudes of teachers and the self-esteem of learners with visual impairments on academic performance. The study involved high school students' self-esteem and reading attitude. The study consisted of 10 classes was developed and reading education was conducted. The study found out that reading that uses a program based on a board game affects high school students' self-esteem and reading attitude. However, the study did not involve primary school pupils and the

study only used a few schools to obtain 10 classes. The current study used primary school pupils' KCPE performance and also involved 29 schools in the sub-county.

Although educators will have to make specific modifications to the teaching approach and classroom arrangements so as to accommodate learners with visual impairments, educators need to still hold these learners to the same standard as the rest of their students. This implies giving them equal opportunities to participate in learning activities and listening to their concerns and needs (Omede, 2015).

According to Simon, et al. (2010), teachers who are highly willing tend to support and contribute positively towards change and decrease resistance to its implementation. Positions and intentions of the educators with regard to the implementation of the right teaching approaches are reflected in the willingness to teach visually impaired learners, what amount of information is required and their ability to perform it. On the other hand, low willingness makes it a challenge in adopting and implementing the proposed change. Several scholars have found that the successful implementation of integrated learning depends majorly on the willingness of educators along with the skills they are required to possess.

According to Penda and Ndhlovu (2013), teachers tend to be generally more supportive towards learners with physical and sensory impairments compared to learners with cognitive and behavioral disabilities. The extent of the disability that educators are obliged to contain in their classes is inversely related to their attitude towards inclusion and teaching. This means that the more severe the disability of the learner, the less positive the teachers' attitude towards integration. The implication of this finding is that teachers will consider severe visual impairment as a nuisance since they have to deal with numerous challenges associated with the disability. This kind of impairment affects the attitude of teachers.

One of the major challenges in an integrated classroom is teachers' dislike of teaching learners with visual impairment. When resources and proper training are not offered, negative results concerning attitudes towards teaching are likely to be experienced (Simon, 2010). Therefore, for effective implementation of integrated education, this major obstacle has to be overcome beforehand. From this understanding, it is equally vital to acknowledge that assessment of teacher's attitudes is critical to providing educators with the training and necessary support services to facilitate them in dealing with the challenge effectively.

The ability of a teacher to enjoy teaching learners with visual impairments lies in their levels of motivation. Motivation is described by Al-Ghafri (2015) as the state that can maintain learner's attention and conduct along with providing the energy required to complete tasks. Therefore, it can sustain learning activities over a long time. In learning, teacher's motivation can have different impacts on learner's behavior, preferences and performance. For example, teacher's motivation can help in directing student's attention towards the learning goals and objectives within short and long periods of time.

According to Shittu and Oanite (2015), teacher's attitudes highly influence student's interest in learning. Teacher's professional attitude in the areas of communication, classroom management and pedagogy may be a strong factor that could influence student's academic performance in schools. Positive professional attitudes of teachers with respect to their teaching job will go a long way in bringing about positive performance to the students while negative attitude demonstrated by teachers in the discharge of their responsibilities may ruin students' academic performance.

According to Fehintola (2014), in a classroom setting a professional teacher must demonstrate an excellent attitude in his teaching. It shows that teachers must put forth an attitude that will help to transform the learners positively in the three domains of learning: cognitive, effective and psychomotor areas. A professional teacher must demonstrate sound attitudes such as neatness, intelligence and desirable traits. Otieno, Okello and Namunga (2023) also noted that mutual and amicable understanding between VI children learning together with regular pupils can be enhanced when teachers have a positive attitude toward VI children learning together with regular pupils.

Langat (2015) examined the attitude of students toward learning and achievement in Mathematics in Public Secondary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design due to the implicit nature of the study. Purposive and random samplings were employed in selecting the schools. The questionnaire was used to collect raw data. The study involved seven public secondary schools and the target population was the form four students who were about to sit for their K.C.S.E examinations. The current study used both a questionnaire and an interview schedule. Quantitative and qualitative data were. However, the study examined the attitude of students in Mathematics in Secondary schools. The current study investigated the influence of attitude of teachers on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment. Quantitative and qualitative data were not employed in the study. The current study used qualitative and quantitative data.

Murithi (2015) study examined the impact of attitudinal adaptation on academic achievement among boys and girls in boarding secondary schools in Meru County in Kenya. A descriptive survey design was adopted in the study with a sample of 384 students, school counselors and deputy principals in the boarding secondary schools. Instruments for the study were questionnaires and interview schedules. The findings revealed that attitudinal adaptation had a positive impact between boys and girls in boarding secondary schools within Meru County. The current study used 74 respondents, SNE teachers, headteachers and CSOs in integrated public primary schools. The study revealed that attitudinal adaptation had a positive impact on academic achievement but there were no significant differences between boys and girls in boarding secondary schools within Meru County. The current study revealed that the attitude of teacher influences the academic performance of learners with visual impairment in integrated public primary schools in Rongo Sub-County.

Chemundeswari (2013) study investigated attitude towards learning science and academic achievement among students at the secondary level. Respondents comprised

of 422 students were chosen randomly. Mean standard deviation, T-test, F-ratio, Karl Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient  $r$  were subjected to statistical analysis. The study revealed that girls are significantly better in their attitude towards learning science when compared to boys in their academic achievement. However, the study did not include the type of instrument used, the research design and the methods involved in data collection. The current study administered questionnaire and interview schedule to the respondents who were teachers and CSOs. The study involved a bigger population. The current study investigated the attitude of teachers and academic performance and it had a small number of respondents.

### 3. Discussions

#### 3.1 Influence of Attitude of the Teachers on Academic Performance

The third objective of the study was to find out the Influence of teachers’ attitude on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment in Public Primary schools in Rongo Sub-county. Responses from headteachers and teachers on the effect of teachers’ attitude on academic performance are summarized below:

Table 1 indicates the response of teachers and headteachers on listening to learners’ concern.

**Table 1:** Listening to Learners’ Concerns

		N = 36		N = 25	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very low	3	7.5	-	-
	Low	11	30	2	7
	Moderate	10	27.5	9	34
	High	8	22.5	6	28
	Very high	4	12.5	8	31
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Data in Table 1 revealed that 3(7.5%) of teachers rated very low statement on being ready to listen to learners, 11(30%) rated low, while 10(27.5%) rated moderate (with a weighted average of 3.27) meaning teacher ready to listen to learners concerns were moderate hence enhancing learners performance, 9(22.5%) rated high and 4(12.5%) rated very high. The results indicated that 2(7%) of the headteachers rated listening to learners’ concern low, 9(34%) moderate, 6(28%) rated high and 8(31%) meaning headteachers ready to listen to learners concerns were moderate hence enhancing learners’ performance in schools. There is a consensus between heads and teachers that the majority of them listen to the concerns of learners and this can improve pupils’ performance. 1(20%) of the CSOs said “*Teachers’ attention to learners with visual impairment is minimal*”. This finding is supported by Shittu (2015) who says that the positive professional attitude of teachers with respect to their teaching job will go a long way in bringing about the positive performance of the pupils while negative attitude demonstrated by teachers in the delivery of their responsibility may mar pupils’ academic performance. This concurs with

Basic Education Act (2013) that giving learners with visual impairment equal opportunities to participate in learning activities and listening to their concerns and needs was a requirement for good academic performance. By eliciting the learner’s voice, learners will feel that their views are taken more seriously, and an increased sense of respect which in turn makes them more inclined to reflect and discuss their learning.

Table 2 indicates the response of teachers and headteachers on willingness to teach the VI.

**Table 2: Willingness to Teach the VI**

		N = 36		N = 25	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very low	2	5	1	3
	Low	7	20	4	17
	Moderate	14	40	4	17
	High	5	12.5	7	28
	Very high	8	22.5	9	35
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Data established in Table 2 established that 2(5%) of the teachers rated very low the statement on willingness to teach learners with VI, 7(20%) rated low, 14(40%) moderate (with a weighted average of 3.27) meaning teachers willing to teach learners with VI were moderate hence promoting good performance, 5(12.5%) rated high and 8(22.5%) rated very high. The study also notes that 1(3%) of the headteachers rated very low, 4(17%) rated low, 4(17%), moderate. The other 7(28%) rated high(with a weighted average of 3.7) meaning headteachers willing to teach learners with VI were moderate hence promoting good performance while 9(35%) rated very high. Teachers who had more special education coursework developed a more positive willingness to teach the VI was moderate and this could be the cause of poor performance. Headteachers were more willing to teach. 1(20%) CSO said “*Few teachers are willing to teach learners with visual impairment*”. This is supported by Simon et al. (2010) that teachers who are highly willing tend to support and contribute positively towards change and decrease resistance to the implementation of the right teaching approaches. The researcher sought to find out from teachers and headteachers about their willingness to teach learners with VI in Table 3.

Table 3 indicates the responses of teachers and headteachers on VI learners being nuisants.

**Table 3: Visually Impaired Learners Are a Nuisance**

		N = 36		N = 25	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very low	12	32.5	15	59
	Low	12	32.5	4	17
	Moderate	6	17.5	4	17
	High	2	5	1	3
	Very high	4	12.5	1	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Data in Table 3 established that 12(32.5%) of the teachers rated very low the statement on finding learners with VI a nuisance, 12(32.5%) rated low, meaning teachers' view on Visually impaired learners are a nuisance were low hence promoting poor performance, 6 (17.5%) moderate, 2(5%) rated high and 4(12.5%) rated very high. Regarding headteachers, results indicate that 15(59%)with an average of 1.7, meaning headteachers' view on visually impaired learners are a nuisance were low hence promoting poor performance rated very low, 4(17%) rated low, 4(17%), moderate. The other 1(3 %) rated high while1 (3%) rated very high. 1(20%) of the CSOs said, *"Teachers in schools with integrated program are of the opinion that visually impaired learners should be taught in Special Schools"*. These statistics indicate that the VI was not seen as nuisants and this could enhance academic performance. This finding is supported by Basic Education Act (2013) which provides the right for every child to free basic education and the right of every child in public primary school to equal standards of education. This was supported by Penda and Ndhlovu (2013) that teachers tend to be generally more supportive towards learners with physical and sensory impairment compared to learners with cognitive and behavioral disabilities. Empowering child self-esteem happens when learners are consulted by their peers and teachers. The researcher sought to find out from teachers and headteachers about visually impaired learners are a nuisance in Table 4.

**Table 4: Dislike Teaching Learners with VI**

		N = 36		N = 25	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very low	18	50	14	55
	Low	3	7.5	2	7
	Moderate	4	12.5	5	21
	High	9	25	3	14
	Very high	2	5	1	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Data in Table 4 established that 18(50%) of the teachers rated very low (with a weighted average of 2.2) meaning teachers dislike teaching learners with VI were low hence promoting poor performance the statement on dislike teaching learners with VI, 3(7.5%) rated low, 4(12.5%) moderate, 9(25 %) rated high and 2(5%) rated very high. Regarding headteachers, results indicate that 14(55%) rated very low (with a weighted average of 2.0), 2(7%) rated low, 5(21%), moderate. The other 3(14%) rated high while 1(3 %) rated very high.1 (20%) CSO said *"teachers admit VI learners in schools with integrated programs"*. These statistics indicate that the VI is not disliked and this could enhance academic performance. According to Mwebi (2012), a learner's voice is about considering the perspectives and ideas of learners, respecting what everyone has to say, taking risks, sharing, listening, engaging and working together in partnership. The researcher sought to find out from teachers and headteachers about dislike teaching learners with VI in Table 5.

Table 5 indicates the response of teachers and headteachers on enjoying teaching learners with VI.

**Table 5: Enjoy Teaching Learners with VI**

		N = 36		N = 25	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very low	3	7.5	3	14
	Low	6	17.5	5	17
	Moderate	7	20	3	14
	High	9	25	9	34
	Very high	11	30	5	21
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Data in Table 5 established that 3(7.5%) of the teachers rated very low the statement on enjoy teaching learners with VI, 6(17.5%) rated low, 7(20%) moderate, 9(25%) rated high and 11(30%) rated very high (with a weighted average of 3.5) meaning teachers enjoy teaching learners with VI were high hence promoting good performance the statement on enjoying teaching learners with VI. Regarding headteachers, results indicate that 3(14%) rated very low, 5(17%) rated low, 3(14%), moderate (with a weighted average of 3.3) meaning headteachers enjoy teaching learners with VI were high, hence promoting good performance. The other 9(34%) rated high. while 5(21%) rated it very high. These results, therefore, indicate that teachers enjoy teaching the VI and this could enhance teaching and learning. 1(20%) CSOs said, “VI learners lack motivation by their teachers for good performance”. This was supported by Al-Ghafri (2015) who stated that learner’s attention and conduct along with providing the energy required to complete tasks was as a result of motivation. A teacher of a learner with VI usually acts as the primary mediator of the learning environment and implements various strategies to facilitate learners’ assimilation in the classroom and school environment. A teacher should provide collaborative learning in areas such as Braille reading and writing orientation and mobility, print adaptation and learning devices. The researcher sought to find out from teachers and headteachers about enjoying teaching learners with VI in Table 5.

### 3.2 Testing of the Null Hypothesis

The relationship between teacher attitude and academic performance expressed in terms of KCPE mean scores was determined by Correlation coefficient and Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance.

#### 3.2.1 Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient for Teachers’ Attitude and Academic Performance

The study determined the influence of the attitude of teachers on the academic performance of visually impaired learners. A correlation between KCPE means scores for the period 2015 to 2018 was conducted and results obtained from the responses were presented in tables 5 and 6.

**Table 6:** Correlation Coefficient for Teachers' Responses

Factor	Correlation with KCPE Mean (2015-2018)		
	Correlation r	signif	N
Teachers' attitude	0.117	0.024*	36

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

There were significant correlations, at  $p < 0.05$  between the KCPE mean scores (2015-2018) and teachers' attitude as revealed in Table 7. There was a positive correlation coefficient meaning it influences academic performance as expressed in terms of KCPE. The positive value means the more positive attitude the higher the performance. The correlation coefficients,  $r$ , was low, meaning that although significant, the relationships were weak.

**Table 7:** Correlation Coefficient for Headteachers' Responses

Factor	Correlation with KCPE Mean (2015-2018)		
	Correlation r	signif	N
Teachers' attitude	-0.034	0.536*	25

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

The results in Table 7 indicate that there was no significant correlations at  $P < 0.05$  between KCPE mean scores (2015-2018) and teacher attitude ( $r = -0.034$ , significance level  $p = 0.536 > 0.05$ ). The  $r$  in this variable was low, ( $-0.034$ ), which was close to  $r = 0.0$ , meaning it has a very low influence on academic performance. These results could imply that a positive attitude does not necessarily translate into high-quality academic performance.

**Hypothesis H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between teacher attitude and academic performance.

**Table 8:** Chi-Square for Teachers' Responses

	Teacher attitude
Chi-Square	160.431 <sup>c</sup>
Df	25
Asymp. Sig.	.001

**Table 9:** Chi-Square for Headteachers' Responses

	Teacher attitude
Chi-Square	242.992 <sup>c</sup>
Df	27
Asymp. Sig.	.003

The results of the analysis summarized in tables 8 and 9 indicate that there was a significant relationship between teacher attitude and academic performance at  $P = 0.001 < 0.05$  and  $P = 0.003 < 0.05$ . The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and concluded that teachers' attitude has a significant effect on academic performance.

#### 4. Summary

According to the results, the majority 12(30%) of the teachers rated listening to learners' concern low while the minority 3(7.5%) rated it very low. On listening to the learners' concern majority 10(34%) of the headteachers rated it moderate while the minority 2(7%) rated it low. The majority 16(40%) of the teachers rated willingness to teach the learners with VI moderate while the minority 2(5%) rated it very low. The majority 10(35%) of the headteachers rated it very high while the minority 1(3%) rated it very low. Minority 2(5%) rated it high. On the same data, majority 17(59%) of the headteachers rated it very low while the minority 1(3%) rated it very high. On dislike teaching learners with VI, the majority 20(50%) of teachers rated it very low while the minority 2(5%) rated it very high. On the same data majority of the headteachers 16(35%) rated it very low while the minority 1(3%) rated it very high. The majority 12(30%) of the teachers rated the statement on enjoying teaching learners with VI very high while the minority 3(7.5%) rated it very low. On the same data, the majority 10(34%) of the headteachers highly rated the statement while a minority 4(14%) rated it very low.

#### 5. Conclusions

The responses of headteachers and SNE teachers on teachers' attitude towards the VI are generally negative. Correlation and chi-square results indicate that teachers' attitude had an influence on academic performance though very low. Teachers need to be motivated to develop a positive attitude towards the VI.

#### Conflict of Interest Statement

We wish to confirm that there are no known conflicts of interest associated with this publication whatsoever.

#### About the Authors

**Riwa Norah Anyango** is a PhD student specializing in Special Needs Education (VI-Option) and is currently a part-time lecturer at Rongo University, Kenya.

**Lazarus Millan Okello** holds PhD in Educational Psychology and is currently the Head of Educational Psychology and Science Department at Rongo University, Kenya. His research interests are on Abnormal Psychology, Chemical Dependency and Drug Abuse in Schools.

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