

The problem of disability is not a new one, for as long as man has been living on earth, there has always been some individuals with limited physical and mental abilities.

Review of literature, reveals that there has been a lot of research work done on the self-perceptions of such individuals in the western countries, whereas, there has been very little research done with the handicapped in Africa and more so in Kenya. It is with this in mind that the present study was carried out to find out how the blind children perceive themselves and their abilities.

A questionnaire was constructed by the researcher and administered to 40 blind children aged 9-14 years from 2 schools for the blind in Kisumu area of Western Kenya. The questionnaire was also administered to 40 non-blind children of similar age-range from 2 ordinary primary schools in the same area. The catchment area for the schools used in the study encompasses, Rift Valley, Western and Nyanza provinces of Kenya. The questionnaire contained items that elicited self-perception of the subjects with regard to their ability to learn, ability to socialize, physical appearance, physical ability, initiativeness and attitude towards integration. The questionnaire also contained items that measured socio-economic status of the subjects.

The collected data was statistically analysed using descriptive statistics, 2-way analysis of variance and the Pearson-product correlation. Self-Perception was used to refer to the way in which a person views himself and his abilities. The words, self-concept and self-perception were used interchangeably in the study.

The results showed the mean score for most of the self-perceptions to be higher for the blind subjects than for the non-blind subjects. Analysis of variance showed some of the differences to be significant, for example, significant differences were observed between the self-perception of the blind and the non-blind children in their attitude towards integration. Differences in perception between the blind boys and blind girls were not observed, whereas, significant differences were observed between the perceptions of non-blind girls and those of non-blind boys. The Pearson product correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated to find out the relationship between the subjects' self-perceptions and their socio-economic status (SES). For the blind subjects, positive correlation was observed between their self-perceptions and SES, except with the blind girls where a negative correlation was observed between their perception of ability to socialise and socio-economic status. Positive correlation was also observed between the self-perceptions of non-blind subjects and their socio-economic status.

These results have implications to the curriculum developers, and the policy makers in special education as well as the blind children themselves. Significant differences in self-perceptions of the blind and non-blind children, should indicate to the policy makers and curriculum developers in special education that it is necessary to have special training for the people working with blind children. It is also necessary to design an appropriate curriculum for teaching them which should take into consideration the Psycho-social development of the blind children. For the blind children, this study will help to create an awareness of what they think of themselves and their abilities. The results will also educate the other members of society on the ability of the blind and it will also help this society to learn to consider blind children as individuals, each with his/her own personality, talents and abilities. This is very important for the integration and acceptance of blind children into their societies.