

Full Length Research Paper

Parental and special education teachers' influence on psychological adjustment of pupils with learning disabilities in inclusive primary schools in Kenya

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Learning disabilities (LDs) encompass a very extensive range of academic problems which can give rise to social and psychological problems. Apart from experiencing academic problems, pupils with LDs experience strong feelings of frustrations, sadness and shame as a result of repeated failure and this can lead to psychological difficulties. These psychological problems are experienced at home and at school and if not addressed, they add to the burden of the condition and could find their way into adulthood. The study was guided by the following objectives: to determine the influence of parent child relationships on pupils' psychological adjustment and to examine the influence of teacher pupil relationships on psychological adjustment of pupils with LDs. Mixed methods research design was used. Saturated and purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants. The sample size was 116 which comprised of 96 pupils, 10 parents and 10 special education teachers. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. Parent child relationships were found to be positively correlated with psychological adjustment with a Pearson's R-value of 0.375 with parents explaining 14.1% of the relationship. Teacher pupil relationships were found to have influence on psychological adjustment of pupils with LDs with a Pearson's R-value of 0.571** with teachers explaining 32.6 % of the relationship.**

Key words: Learning disabilities, psychological adjustment, inclusive primary schools, pupils, special education teachers, parental influence, teacher influence.

INTRODUCTION

A growing body of research increasingly recognizes the importance of addressing influence of school and family environment on academic development of children (Papanastasiou, 2017; Heiman and Berger 2008; Barkauskiene, 2009; Kinyua, 2008; Bariroh, 2018). While

previous research has shown the impact of parent-child relationship and teacher-child relationship on psychological adjustment of typical learning children (Rueger et al., 2010; Sarkova et al 2014), few studies have investigated the influence of these variables on

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psychological adjustment of children with LDs. An understanding of the role of these variables in a population with LDs may have significant implication for psychological interventions. Parent-child relationship and teacher-child relationship are likely to be useful targets for programs aimed at enhancing psychological adjustment among children with LDs. However, prior to the utilization of these variables in such interventions, increased knowledge on their impact on psychological adjustment of children with LDs is needed.

Researchers in Kenya have focused on awareness and remedial interventions for LDs. A study by Gateru (2010) to assess the teacher awareness and intervention for children reported that 79% of teachers had identified pupils with LDs in their schools, while 64% of teachers had interventions for children with LDs. Kinyua (2008) while looking ways of promoting teacher-parent collaboration in the education of pupils with LDs found that teachers were reluctant to work with parents in schools. Whereas identification, awareness and remedial interventions for children with LDs are important, psychological adjustment of children with LDs requires attention since it is an important aspect of children's development. This study therefore seeks to investigate the influence of parent-child and teacher-child relationships on psychological adjustment of children with LDs in inclusive schools in Kisumu East Sub County, Kenya.

Psychological adjustment is defined as general feelings of well-being and satisfaction an individual comes to experience because of reduction of the stress in their everyday lives (Jackson et al. 2008). According to Ward and Kennedy (1999) psychological adjustment is defined in terms of emotional and affective outcomes. It has a number of mental health outcomes such as depressive symptoms, mood disturbances, general well-being and satisfaction with life. In assessing psychological adjustment among children with LDs, four indicators namely depressive symptoms, self-esteem, anxiety and anger were used in this study.

Statement of the problem

Children with LDs recognize the importance of school and often desire to be successful, making their frequent difficulties and feelings of failure all the more stressful and damaging. Furthermore, when expectations from both the individuals and important people in their lives are high, feelings of inadequate performance can be experienced as stressful. The increase in demand to focus on academic achievement leaves little room for time or resources to be allocated to other aspects of the child's life. While all challenges faced by children are stressful, feelings of failure and inadequacy that stem from poor academic performance may have the greatest impact on their psychological adjustment. Children with

LDs are a vulnerable population both inside and outside of the school environment and it is essential to understand their experiences in order to provide them with the level of support that they need. This study therefore sought to establish the contextual influence of parents and special education teachers on psychological adjustment of children with LDs in inclusive primary schools in Kisumu East Sub County, Kenya.

Objectives of study

The study aims to determine the influence of parent-child relationship on psychological adjustment of children with LDs and to examine the influence of special education teachers on psychological adjustment of children with LDs in inclusive primary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influence of parent-child relationship on pupil's psychological adjustment

Parent-child relationships are generally believed to play a crucial role in shaping children's development and adjustment. Parental involvement and affection is a major factor in the emotional and social development of the child, which in turn affects the psychological self-assessment of the child. In relation to child development, it is important that children are raised in a supportive environment, with appropriate parenting and social support from others. The parent-child relationship can be viewed as being positive or conflicting (Pianta, 1992). Positive parent-child relationships are characterized by responsiveness, sensitivity and availability. Parents' responsiveness consists of warm, accepting and affectionate behavior (Karreman et al., 2006; Spinrad et al., 2007). On the other hand, parents' conflictual relationships with their children are marked by low levels of sensitivity and availability.

Social scientists in general and psychologists in particular, largely agree that parent-child relationships play a crucial role in shaping children's development and adjustment. Research literature shows evidence that the quality of both mother and father and child relationships remains the most reliable predictor of individual differences in psychological, social and cognitive adjustment in children (Lamb and Lewis, 2011; Thompson, 2006). Parent-child relationships are significantly related to both children's and adolescents' levels of externalizing and internalizing behaviors. Specifically, children and adolescents with good parent-child relationships experience lower levels of depression (Demir et al., 2011). In addition, close parent-child relationships increased children's and adolescents' self-esteem (Ackard et al., 2006). Other studies show that

family conflicts, hostility and rejection have all been linked to a later diagnosis of depression, while deficits in family communication were also related to substance use, suicide, depression, low self-esteem and maladaptive eating patterns (Ghanizadeh and Shams, 2007). Yap et al. (2014) found that parental warmth, emotional support and autonomy granting reduce the risk of depression and anxiety.

While recognizing that both parents play significant roles in the nurturing and the raising of their children, there are conflicting findings on effects of mother-child and father-child relationships on the development and adjustment of children. Some studies have shown that mothers' relationships with children are more closely linked to children's mental health than relationships with fathers (Gryczkowski et al., 2010; Sandler et al., 2008). These results support those found by Branje et al. (2010) on parent-child relationship and depression that indicated that relationship quality with mothers was a predictor of more depressive symptoms reported in adolescents. Relationship quality with fathers also predicted depressive symptoms, but only for boys. On the other hand, recent research suggests father-child relationships are as influential on children's and adolescents' mental health as mother-child relationships (Stafford et al., 2016; Gryczkowski et al., 2010; Mallers et al., 2010). These studies were carried out on normally achieving and typically developing children. The current study focused on parental relationships with children with LDs.

Several studies (Dyson, 2003; Dervishalaj, 2013; Aldosari and Pufpaff, 2014) indicate that mothers and fathers of school-age children with disabilities experience greater and more frequent stress because of their parenting demands than parents of children without disabilities. LD, a hidden and unexpected handicap in a child with normal intelligence, presents a great parental stress and creates difficulties in the relationship between parents and children (Amerongen and Mishna, 2004). Once a child has been diagnosed with LD, the parents' main concern is usually on how to help the child improve in his/her academic performance. It appears that relentless focus on the child's academic failures can undermine family relationships and impact on the quality of the parent interactions with the child. Wiener (2003) suggests some parents may place such value on achievement that they are unable to accept the existence, extent of, or implications of their children's LDs. Even though they provide support for learning, their children may experience high levels of anxiety because they can never measure up to their parent's expectations. Children with LDs need support as they come to terms with their disability. The value of parental support for children with LDs may lie in the quality of emotional support rather than practical support. Graziano et al. (2009) examined the role of parental support on depressive feelings and social and academic self-efficacy and indicated that high levels of perceived support from

both parents were related to lower levels of depressive feelings and higher levels of social and academic self-efficacy. In another study, self-esteem was associated with family characteristics and routines as well as parent-child relationship quality. Thus children who perceive the presence of supportive family have high self-esteem and that an increase in the quality of parent child relationship is always paired with higher self-esteem among children (Lian and Yusoof, 2009). Shehu et al. (2015) also studied the impact of quality social relationships on self-esteem of children with dyslexia. The data analysis identified a positive correlation between healthy parent-child relationship and high level of self-esteem in dyslexic children.

Open parent-child communication is one aspect of good parent-child relationships that plays a critical role in maintaining the healthy function of the family system and children's development. Ochoa et al. (2007) found a link between open communication between parents and children's positive family self-concept, which in turn related to a positive academic self-concept. Bireda and Pillay (2017) found that parents would continue to influence children's psychological adjustment through their continuous interactions and quality of communication. The findings thus show that open communication with parents protects children from experiencing school adjustment problems, low self-esteem and depression. A study was conducted by Emam and Abu-Serei (2014) to investigate whether family functioning can predict the self-concept and self-esteem of LDs students in Oman regardless of parent education level and gender status. Results showed that family functioning was a strong contributory factor of self-concept for both children with and without LDs, although the two groups differed in terms of the significant family functioning predictors.

Another study by Chohan and Khan (2010) revealed there is significant impact of parental support on the academic achievement as well as on the development of self-concept of the children. This study examined the impact of educational support given by the parents on the academic achievement and on the self-concept of grade 4 public school students. The findings of the study by Chohan and Khan (2010) are in agreement with the study conducted by Rueger et al. (2010) who found that there were significant associations between all sources of support with depressive symptoms, anxiety, self-esteem and academic adjustment with parental support as a robust unique predictor of adjustment for both boys and girls. Despite the many studies done on parent child relationships and psychological adjustment, there remains need to investigate this area since most of the studies have been carried out in Europe and America. The current study was carried out in Kenya and parent child relationship was conceptualized in terms of single and intact families comprising of parental support and parent child communication.

Influence of special education teachers on psychological adjustment

Literature examining teacher-child relationships consistently points to a positive association between good teacher-child relationships and children's academic, social-emotional and mental health outcomes (Demaray and Malecki, 2002; Hamre and Pianta, 2001; Reddy et al., 2003). This has been demonstrated in both regular and special education classes in community settings throughout the developmental stages. For example, children's relationships with their kindergarten teachers predicted grades and standardized-test scores through fourth grade and positive child-teacher relationships are associated with fewer disciplinary actions and increased work habits through middle school (Hamre and Pianta, 2001). In middle school, children's perceived teacher support has corresponded to increases in self-esteem and decreases in depressive symptoms Reddy et al., 2003) and teachers' ratings of relationship quality has been linked to student risky behavior (Rudasill et al., 2010).

In high school, feelings of relatedness with teachers are associated with positive school attitudes, including motivation, success expectations and interest in school (Roeser et al., 1998; Wentzel et al., 2010) as well as improved achievement and self-esteem (Martin et al., 2007) and fewer depressive symptoms (Possel et al., 2013). Teachers have significant lifelong impact on all their students; impact that involves academic skill and fostering psychological wellbeing. Therefore, the influence of teacher-child relationship on psychological adjustment of pupils with LDs was an important element of this study.

As children enter formal school settings, relationships with teachers provide the foundation for successful adaptation to the social and academic environment. From the first day of school, young children must rely on teachers to provide them with the understanding and support that will allow them to get the most out of their daily interactions in the classroom. Children who form close relationships with teachers enjoy school more and get along better with peers. Positive relationships with teachers can also serve as a secure base for young children; they are better able to play and work on their own because they know that if things get difficult or if they are upset, they can count on their teacher to recognize and respond to these problems (Hamre and Pianta, 2001). Children's relationships with their teachers have shown to be important predictors of adjustment. Indeed, schools are interpersonal settings, in which relationships influence children's motivation, academic performance and psychosocial adjustment. Relationships with teachers can be particularly important to children with LDs, who are often undergoing profound shifts in their sense of self and are struggling to negotiate changing relationships with their parents and peers. An

increasingly large number of theorists and specialists acknowledge the therapeutic role of the educator in dealing with children with serious problems or difficulties (Elliott and Place, 2012; Kourkoutas, 2012).

In the past, many studies have explored the influence of the teacher-child relationship quality on the adequate development of typically developing children (Murray and Greenberg, 2006; Murray and Pianta, 2007). The few existing studies on close relationships with teachers of children with disabilities revealed the role of these relationships as a protective factor for the children's social and emotional adaptive functioning (Al-Yagon, 2009; Arthur, 2003). Most of the existing studies indicate that, compared to teacher-child relationships of typically developing children, those of children with disabilities are characterized by a higher level of rejection and dissatisfaction and lower levels of acceptance and closeness. Moreover, teachers in general have difficulty establishing optimal relationships with children with disabilities (Al-Yagon and Mikulincer, 2004). Wang and Eccles (2013) found that teacher acceptance is associated with student psychological adjustment in both boys and girls and has protective roles against depressive symptoms, behavioural problems and promotes resilience and academic achievement. This corroborates a study carried out earlier by (Rohner, 2010), which was a cross-cultural meta-analysis that tested the contribution of teachers' and parents' acceptance to youth's psychological adjustment and school conduct. It was based on nine studies involving 2,422 school-going youth in 12 nations. Results showed that both parental and teacher acceptance correlate significantly in all countries with psychological adjustment and school conduct of children, regardless of gender differences.

Given that children spend a good deal of their lives at school, it seems reasonable that supportive relationships with teachers could benefit their emotional well-being. Reddy and colleagues found that changes in perceptions of teachers' support reliably predicted changes in self-esteem and depression in both boys and girls (Reddy et al., 2003). A five years longitudinal study on the associations between teacher emotional support and depressive symptoms in Australian adolescents found that children of both sexes with average and high numbers of stressful events benefit from teacher support (Possel et al., 2013). Teachers undoubtedly play a substantial role in taking action to prevent children from developing further psychological problems. Of course teachers are not trained to be experts in psychological difficulties and interventions; however they are often involved in intense interaction with these children; as they spend a substantial amount of time with them, teachers can provide vital information regarding their behaviour and functioning and help professionals in designing appropriate interventions (Kauffman and Landrum, 2013).

Majority of studies on teacher pupil relationship have

Table 1. Internal reliabilities results.

| Questionnaire Section | Cronbach's Alpha | Range | Label |
|--|------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Psychological adjustment 39-item scale | 0.65 | 0.60 < α < 0.70 | Moderate |
| Parent-pupil relationship 8-item scale | 0.72 | 0.70 < α < 0.80 | Good |
| Teacher-pupil relationships 8-item scale | 0.66 | 0.60 < α < 0.70 | Moderate |

focused on typically developing and normally achieving children. The results from these studies have shown that teacher pupils' relationships are associated with increased motivation and learning. The current study examined the teacher pupil relationship between special education teachers and pupils with LDs. The focus was on how this relationship influenced psychological adjustment.

This study is significant because psychological adjustment of children with LDs has not received much attention in Kenya and it is an important aspect of children's development.

Therefore, this study is significant to parents, government and teachers. Parents of pupils with LDs will have better understanding of the impact of parent child relationships on their children and hence they will be helped to relate with their children appropriately. Special education teachers will be exposed to the impact of teacher pupil and peer relationships on the psychological adjustment of pupils with LDs and will see the need to foster healthy relationships with pupils in the classroom for positive adjustment of all.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

Mixed method research approach was used for this study. Mixed method research is a research design whose central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems.

Sample

Ninety six (96) children with LDs participated in the study; 53 boys (51.1%) and 43 girls (48.1%). All were from the ten (10) inclusive primary schools in Kisumu East Sub County, Kenya and lived with one or both parents. Their ages ranged from 11-16 years. Ten (10) (6 ladies and 4 men) special education teachers with Diploma in Special Needs Education were interviewed. Ten (10) parents (5 mothers and 5 fathers) whose ages ranged between 32 and 54 years were also interviewed.

Instruments

Questionnaire

Children relationship with parents was measured using eight (8) items in the questionnaire which focused on parental support and parent-child communication. Children relationship with special education teachers was measured using seven (7) items in the

questionnaire that focused on teacher acceptance and support. A five point Likert scale was used for scoring the responses. The questionnaire was administered to children with LDs.

Validity and reliability

The researcher subjected the instruments to content validity. Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis was used to measure the internal consistency of the instruments, because it is the most consistent test of inter-item consistency reliability for Likert scaled or rating scaled questionnaires. The reliability for multi-item opinion items were computed separately for all the subscales in the students' questionnaires and the coefficient alpha of these variables were reported. All the sub-scales met the required level of internal consistency of reliability. Table 1 shows different multi-item scale and the produced Cronbach's Alphas. The three Cronbach's alpha values fall in the ranges depicted in Table 1. According to Hejase and Hejase (2013, p. 570), "the generally agreed upon lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, although it may decrease to 0.60 in exploratory research." This indicates an adequate strength of association and "proves that the selection of the questions is suitable for the questionnaire purpose" (Chehimi et al., 2019, p.1915).

Interview

The interview was structured and based on predetermined questions. Face to face interview was used for the study where the interviewer asked the interviewees oral questions with regard to the objectives of the study. This was mainly used to get more information regarding the topic of the study and cross check questionnaire responses to enhance reliability of data collected. Credibility which is often called internal validity refers to the believability and trustworthiness of the findings. To assure credibility triangulation was employed. Triangulation was used to cross validate the study findings. To ensure dependability, which is also now as reliability, the researcher used triangulation and also verified participants' response uniformity. There were two interviews; one for the special education teachers and the other for the parents of the children with LDs.

Data collection procedure

After obtaining approval and relevant authorization, the indulgence of the schools head teachers was sought on the logistics of carrying out the research especially in regard to identification of the children with LDs and their parents. Data from children with LDs and special education teachers was collected during games time. The parents were accessed during their weekly support group meetings. The purpose of the research was explained adequately to the respondents and sufficient clarification made where concerns arose. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the pupils and conducted face to face interviews with the special education teachers and parents. Each questionnaire took 10 minutes to complete while each interview lasted 20 minutes.

Table 2. Relationship with parents and psychological adjustment.

| Variable | | Psychological adjustment | Relationship with parents |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Psychological adjustment | Pearson correlation | 1 | 0.375** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.000 |
| | N | 96 | 96 |
| Relationship with parents | Pearson correlation | 0.375** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | |
| | N | 96 | 96 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics

The respondents were distributed as follows: 45.8% were in the 13-14 years age bracket. The participants of 12 years and below age bracket constituted 32.3%, while 21.9% of the study population was made up of 15 years and above bracket. The distribution shows that 46.6% of the respondents lived with the mothers only, 35.4% with both parents and 17.7% lived with fathers alone.

Influence of parent child relationship on psychological adjustment of children with LDs

Findings of the study showed that children with both parents had a healthier relationship with their parents (mean =28.50; SD=6.32) than children with single parents. However, the findings of the study revealed that psychological adjustment of children with mothers (mean=26.98; SD = 7.03) was much better than that of the children with fathers only. (Mean = 25.29; SD 9.24.)The findings suggest that children brought up with both parents enjoyed healthy parent-child relationship which led to positive outcomes for the children and the family. These findings concur with studies that reveal that mothers' relationships with children are more closely linked to children's mental health than relationships with fathers (Gryczkowski et al., 2010; Sandler et al., 2008). Furthermore, Branje et al. (2010) indicated that relationship quality to mothers was a predictor of more depressive symptoms reported in adolescents. Therefore, family structure is an important aspect in psychological adjustment of children with LDs. The parent-child relationship was conceptualized by the level of communication and support between parents and their children with LDs. In the study it was found that pupils who enjoyed supportive relationships and open communication with their parents were better adjusted. In other words they had low scores on depression, self-esteem, anxiety and anger. In concurrence, Chohan and

Khan (2010) revealed there is significant impact of parental support on the children. Supportive relationships may involve checking on the child's progress in school, helping with the homework and showing concern for the children's wellbeing. Open communication encourages the child to share concerns with the parent. This in turn makes the child feel valued and cared for leading to positive psychological adjustment.

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed, with overall scores on indicators of parent-child relationship as independent variable and psychological adjustment among the children with LDs as dependent variable. Average scores were calculated for each sub-scale so that high scores indicate high levels of relationships and high levels of psychological adjustment. The scores of the variables were computed from frequency of responses and converted into continuous data by computing mean responses per respondents. The p-value was set at .05. The results of correlation analysis are shown in Table 2. The finding of the study showed that there was a positive correlation ($r=0.375$, $n=96$, $p < .05$) between relationship with parents and psychological adjustment. It was therefore concluded that children with LDs adjust better when they have a strong positive relationship with the parents. To estimate the level of influence of parent-child relationship on overall psychological adjustment, a coefficient of determination (R^2) was computed. This was done using regression analysis and the result was as shown in Table 3.

The model shows that parent-child relationship accounted for 14.1 and 13.2%, as signified by coefficient $R^2 = 0.141$ and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.132$ (here Adjusted coefficient of determination is adopted due to its insensitivity to number of independent variables and sample size), of the variation in psychological adjustment among learners with LDs. This finding implies that about 13% of variability in psychological adjustment among learners with LDs is explained by parent-child relationship alone. Furthermore, a regression model on the association between parent-child relationships and psychological adjustment of pupils was developed. Table 4 shows the coefficient value of the model. From the

Table 3. Model summary on regression analysis of influence of parent child relationship on psychological adjustment.

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.375 ^a | 0.141 | 0.132 | .06732 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Relationship with parents.

Table 4. Coefficient output: parent-child relationships on psychological adjustment.

| Model | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | B | Std. error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| (Constant) | 2.673 | 0.269 | | 9.948 | 0.000 | 2.139 | 3.206 |
| Relationship with parent | 0.300 | 0.076 | 0.375 | 3.926 | 0.000 | 0.148 | 0.451 |

a. Dependent variable: Psychological adjustment.

model, the standardized coefficient which is equal to 0.375 means that for each one unit improvement in parent-child relationship, there is an increase in psychological adjustment of 0.375 units. Findings on the influence of parent-child relationship on psychological adjustment of pupils with LDs show that there was positive relationship between general parent child relationship and psychological adjustment of children with LDs. That means that positive parent-child relationship is associated with overall psychological adjustment. LDs diagnosis causes stress and anxiety to parents and this can in turn cause parent child relationships to be strained.

In concurrence with the current study, Yap et al. (2014) found that emotional support from parents may reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety in children. Another study by Lian and Yusoo (2009) also found that children who perceive the presence of supportive family possess high self-esteem and that an increase in the quality of family functioning is always paired with higher self-esteem among children. This is important for parents because they can improve their relationships with their children with LDs by being supportive. The findings of the current study also concur with that of Jackson et al. (2008) who found that there were significant associations between all sources of support with depressive symptoms, anxiety, self-esteem and academic adjustment with parental support as a robust unique predictor of adjustment for both boys and girls. Thus, providing children with LDs with social support may be a useful intervention strategy in order to increase self-esteem of these children.

Communication is an important aspect of parent-child relationship. A study by Bireda and Pillay (2017) found that both perceived maternal and paternal communication significantly predicted children's well-being as measured by self-reported scores of depression, school adjustment,

substance use and self-esteem. This study specifically studied parent child communication. Although a study by Branje et al. (2010) established gender differences on the effect of parent-child communication, present findings are in agreement with Bireda and Pillay (2017) that parent child communication is not influenced by the gender of the parent. Nevertheless, paternal and maternal communication influences children's well-being. The findings were further supported by the views of the parents who were interviewed. Ten parents were interviewed on their relationship with their children with LDs. Most of the parents (7 out of 10) who were interviewed said that relationships with their children were good. Below are some verbatim from some of them:

P6: "Relationship with my son is good; I was taught how to relate with him by the British group. We communicate very well; he is free with me and shares most of his concerns with me".

However, three (3) parents had different perspectives on relationships with their children with LDs. *P5: "I have two daughters with LDs and my relationship with them is not good. At times I don't even want to talk to them".*

Influence of special education teachers on psychological adjustment of children with LDs in inclusive primary schools

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was computed, with overall scores on indicators of special education teacher relationship as independent variable and psychological adjustment among the pupils with LDs as dependent variable. Table 5 shows the correlation analysis results. The finding of the study indicated that there was a statistically significant positive correlation ($r=0.571$, $n=96$, $p<0.05$) between teacher-child relationship

Table 5. Relationship with teacher and psychological adjustment.

| Variable | | Psychological adjustment | Relationship with parents |
|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Psychological adjustment | Pearson correlation | 1 | 0.571** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.000 |
| | N | 96 | 96 |
| Relationship with teachers | Pearson correlation | 0.571** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | |
| | N | 96 | 96 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6. Model summary on regression analysis of influence of teacher relationship on psychological adjustment.

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R square | Std. error of the estimate |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.571 ^a | 0.326 | 0.319 | 0.05964 |

a. Predictors: (constant), relationship with teachers.

Table 7. Coefficient output: teacher relationships on psychological adjustment of pupils with LDs.

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | | B | Std. error | Beta | | | Lower bound | Upper bound |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.581 | 0.319 | | 4.953 | 0.000 | 0.947 | 2.215 |
| | Relationship with teachers | 0.530 | 0.079 | 0.571 | 6.739 | 0.000 | 0.374 | 0.687 |

a. Dependent variable: psychological adjustment.

and psychological adjustment. This implies that teachers play an important role in the psychological adjustment of children with LDs and that a strong positive teacher-child relationship is a predictor of positive adjustment. This could be explained by Pianta (1992) while referring to the psychological needs in the Self Determination Theory suggested that teacher-student relationships are the media through which these psychological needs are met. Wang and Eccles (2013) in agreement noted that teacher acceptance is associated with student psychological adjustment. To estimate the level of influence of teacher relationship on overall psychological adjustment of pupils with LDs, a coefficient of determination was computed. This was done using regression analysis and the result was as shown in Table 6.

The model summary shows that teacher relationship accounted for 32.6% ($R^2 = .326$) and 31.9% (Adjusted $R^2 = .319$) (here Adjusted coefficient of determination is adopted due to its insensitivity to number of independent variables and sample size) of the variation in psychological adjustment among children with LDs. The

implication of this is that, teacher-child relationship explains about 31.9% of the variability of psychological adjustment among children with LDs, meaning that in about one out of every three children with LDs their level of psychological adjustment is influenced by their relationship with their teacher. Furthermore, a regression model on the relationship between teacher relationships and psychological adjustment of children with LDs was developed. Table 7 shows the coefficient value of the model. From the model, the standardized coefficient which is equal to .571 means that for each one unit improvement in teacher-child relationship, there is an increase in psychological adjustment of .571 units. This implies that more improvement in teacher-child relationship results into improved psychological adjustment of the child.

The teacher-child relationship is important because it mediates the parent-child relationship and the peer-child relationships. The teacher-child relationship can be seen as an extension of the parent-child relationship, while the peer-child relationship may be influenced by the child's perception of the teacher's relationship with other

children. Thus children who experience positive relationships with teachers are more likely to have positive relationships with peers. The possible explanation for the trust that children place on their teachers can influence other relationships in their lives. It is hypothesized that teacher family communication that promotes children's sense of competence and enhances feelings of relatedness to the teacher or school can foster high levels of motivation (Thompson, 2006).

The findings that teacher-child relationships influence psychological adjustment of children with LDs are consistent with research findings by Murray and Pianta (2007) who found that overall teacher-child relationships are significantly positively related to psychological adjustment of adolescents. This implies that teacher acceptance and supportive relationships provide some psychological cushion against maladjustment in school. This is supported by Wang and Eccless (2013) and Rohner (2010) who found that teacher acceptance and supportive relationships were associated with children psychological adjustment in both boys and girls and have protective roles against depressive symptoms. Teacher-child relationship is important, especially in inclusive schools because of the stigma and frustrations children with LDs suffer when they compare themselves to the typical learners. Kourkoutas (2012) postulated that teachers play a therapeutic role in dealing with children with difficulties. Relationships with teachers can be particularly important to children with LDs, who are often undergoing profound shifts in their sense of self and are struggling to negotiate changing relationships with their parents and peers.

Schools are interpersonal settings, in which relationships influence children's motivation, academic performance and teach psychosocial adjustment. This may be explained by theory of Self-determination by Deci and Ryan (2012), which postulates that the support children receive from the socializing environment, promotes or undermines the children's intrinsic motivation towards psychological growth and development. That means teacher-child relationship that is characterized by acceptance and support is important for the psychological wellbeing of children with LDs.

To get the views of the special education teachers, the researcher conducted a face to face interview with 10 special education teachers. They were asked to describe their relationship with pupils with LD. The responses given were; try to be close and friendly to the pupils, paying keen interest and making follow up on the pupils. The interviewees were asked to share on how they showed support and acceptance to pupils with LD. Some of their responses are as stated below:

T3: "I sensitize other learners to accept and give them support. I offer them support by breaking class work into manageable units and giving them extra time to complete their work".

Another teacher had the following to say:

T8: "I give them activities according to their abilities and give them more attention".

The findings from both the analysis and interviews reveal that special education teachers in the inclusive schools under study had a positive relationship with the pupils with LD. This is evident from the responses they gave on how they related with the pupils. It is thus important for teachers to engage in positive relationships with their pupils in school. One way this has been achieved in Kisumu East Sub County is through the programs by Leonard Cheshire Disability Organization, which provides teachers with training on how to foster positive relationships with their pupils.

Conclusion

From the findings on the influence of parent-child relationship on psychological adjustment of children with LDs, it was concluded that children with both parents have a healthier relationship with their parents than children with single parents. It was also concluded that children with mothers alone adjust better psychologically than children with fathers alone. However, it was generally concluded that strong parental relationship with a child with LDs always results into overall psychological adjustment irrespective of the gender of the parent; that is, children with LDs adjust better when they have a strong positive relationship with the parents. On the relationship with teachers and psychological adjustment, it was concluded that with improved cordial teacher-child relationship there is an increase in overall psychological adjustment. This was concluded to mean that children with LDs adjust better when they have a strong positive relationship with their teachers.

Recommendations

Given that parent-child relationship has an influence on psychological adjustment, it is recommended that awareness creation and sensitization on prevalence and manifestations of LDs be encouraged so that more parents can take their children for assessment and develop positive relationships with them. Even though special education teachers seem to be offering support to the children with LDs, the study recommends that the government trains and posts more special education teachers to the inclusive schools for children with LDs to benefit more.

Limitation

The participants of this study were pupils with LDs, their

parents and special education teachers of public inclusive primary schools. Thus views of head teachers, regular teachers and school counselors were overlooked due to financial constraints and other logistics such as time. Another limitation is limited generalization of the study. The study was carried out in Kisumu East Sub County; an area which has received a lot of sensitization on LDs; making it difficult to generalize the findings to mainstream schools and other Sub Counties.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

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