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The Factors Affecting the Learners with Albinism in Inclusive Schools: Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

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Abstract

This manuscript is an extract of a theoretical framework and conceptual framework from a Master's an on-going study on factors affecting learners with albinism in inclusive schools. The work is an attempt to identify the factors affecting learners with albinism in inclusive schools in Zambia. Among the factors that can affect these learners are such as stigma, labeling, attitudes, discrimination and skin sensitivity in the school setup. It is argued that if these factors are identified and addressed learners with albinism can benefit a lot from education under education system.

Keywords: Albinism, Factors, Inclusive school

Introduction

1.1 Background

There are factors that affect the learning of learners with albinism in an inclusive setting. This is supported by Ashley, (1992) who found that learners with albinism are faced with various factors which affect them in inclusive settings of which the researchers are in agreement.

In support of learners with albinism, at international level discrimination laws of (1992), in Australia protect the rights of persons with albinism. In Canada and the United States, persons with albinism are considered according to domestic legislation (Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, 2013). Although at international level, there is legal support towards learners with albinism, factors affecting learners with albinism in an inclusive school, were not paid attention to.

In Africa, with particular reference to South Africa, according to Msomi, (2014) the country is in support of learners with albinism according to Section 10 of the Constitution which enshrines that everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. Furthermore promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of (2000), is a core piece of enabling legislation aimed at facilitating the realization of the rights of all people in South Africa, particularly minority groups which have been historically marginalized which includes persons with albinism. However, the factors affecting learners with albinism in inclusive school were not highlighted in these documents in South Africa.

In Zambia in support of learners with albinism a study was conducted by Miles, (2011) who explored the understandings of inclusive education at school and community level in Northern Zambia about learners with albinism, the understanding was that disability was a cause of educational exclusion. Although one factor affecting learners with albinism in an inclusive school was noted, other factors were left out.

Though there was support in various ways at international level, in Africa, with particular interest to South Africa and in Zambia there has been no much done in terms of identifying the factors affecting the learners with albinism in an inclusive school.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There are various factors affecting learners with albinism in an inclusive school. There has been support towards learners with albinism at international level, in Africa, with particular

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reference to South Africa and in Zambia. However, there has been no much done in terms of identifying the factors affecting the learners with albinism in an inclusive school. Therefore, the master's ongoing study is an investigation on the factors affecting learners with albinism in an inclusive school in three selected schools in Mazabuka district in Zambia.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study is important as it will bring forth the factors affecting the learners with albinism in an inclusive school. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be added to the body of knowledge on factors affecting learners with albinism in the mainstream.

1.4 Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework

The following theoretical framework and conceptual framework would be used while investigating on the factors affecting learners with albinism in an inclusive school in three selected schools.

1.4.1 Theoretical Framework

The master's on-going study will be guided by stigma model by Goffman (1963). This model will be effective because it will provide an analytical framework for theorizing factors by using the aspects namely stigma, labeling, attitudes, discrimination and skin sensitivity in an inclusive school setup and the researchers are in agreement with these aspects.

The subsequent paragraphs therefore, try to explain how involving stigma, labeling, attitudes, discrimination and skin sensitivity can be used in identifying factors that affect learners with albinism in an inclusive school.

Concerning the issue of stigma, Goffman (1963) defines a stigmatized person as one that possesses an attribute that is deeply discrediting. Goffman (1963) refers to those who stigmatize others as 'normals'. He further mentions three types of stigma. To start with, according to him abominations of the body is the first type of stigma and persons are stigmatized because of having different kinds of physical deformities and conditions such as blindness and albinism. According to him, the second type of stigma is called blemishes of individual character. Under this type of stigma persons who are stigmatized are perceived as having weak will, unnatural passions, dishonesty and these could be due to the condition of albinism. The third type of stigma is called tribal stigma of race. Regarding learners with albinism the aspect of stigma will be a guide in identifying if learners are stigmatized or not and take note of those who stigmatize these learners.

Another aspect found in the model of Goffman is Labelling. A Label is a mark assigned to an individual. Goffman, (1963) discovered that the label attached to an individual condition is very crucial and influences the way people think about the individual. According to him albinism is powerful label however; the people with albinism may not have a problem being called albinos but the stigma which can lead to losing peers or classmates. Regarding learners with albinism the aspect of labeling will

be a guide in identifying how other learners relate with learners with albinism.

According to Goffman, (1963) attitudes is another aspect being considered in the model of stigma. This is where attitudes of peers and teachers can evidently affect learners with albinism at school and that can make them feel double stigmatized because of the color of their skin and the visual impairment. For example, in a school situation learners with albinism may hesitate to read aloud because other learners might laugh at them because the learners with albinism will have to bring the material they are reading very close to the eyes. Another example in a classroom situation is that other learners may be afraid to sit next to the child with albinism due to the skin color. Regarding learners with albinism the aspect of attitude will be a guide in identifying how teachers and pupils relate with these learners.

Discrimination is another issue considered in this model. Discrimination is the unjust treatment of someone by other people due to being different such as having body deformity or disability. Discrimination is perceived by Goffman (1963) in this model as 'visibility' which is a particular stigma which is important when determining whether an individual is to be stigmatized against or not. In this vein discrimination comes about as a result of attributes of an albino such as skin color and particular visual impairment which can provide visible evidence of stigma, so their barrier can be immediately discredited. Albinism is unlike other discredited traits that Goffman says can be 'covered' and 'concealed' (Goffman, 1963). However, people with albinism cannot cover their whole bodies to 'cover' this condition so that they will not be easily noticed by other 'normals'. Regarding learners with albinism the aspect of discrimination will be a guide in identifying if these learners discriminated and it will help in noticing those who discriminate them.

Finally, Goffman discussed the issue of skin sensitivity. Skin sensitivity is a problem that people with albinism have to live with and it brings with it problems of sunburns when it is sunny. Goffman, (1963) contends that learners with albinism have Skin sensitivity problem which can isolate them from participating in outdoor activities such as sporting activities, gardening, preventive maintenance of cleaning the surrounding, and field trips due to sun burns from sun rays. The learners with albinism may fail to endure the sting of the sun's rays on their vulnerable skin when carrying out those activities. Regarding learners with albinism the aspect of skin sensitivity will be a guide in identifying if these learners are taken care of during outdoor activities.

This stigma model fits well with the master's on-going research to be carried out which is an investigation of factors affecting learners with albinism in inclusive schools because it will help the researchers in identifying and understanding the factors that affect the learners with albinism in inclusive schools. This is because the stigma model focuses on stigma, labeling, attitudes, discrimination and skin sensitivity which will act as a framework for this study.

1.4.2 Conceptual Framework

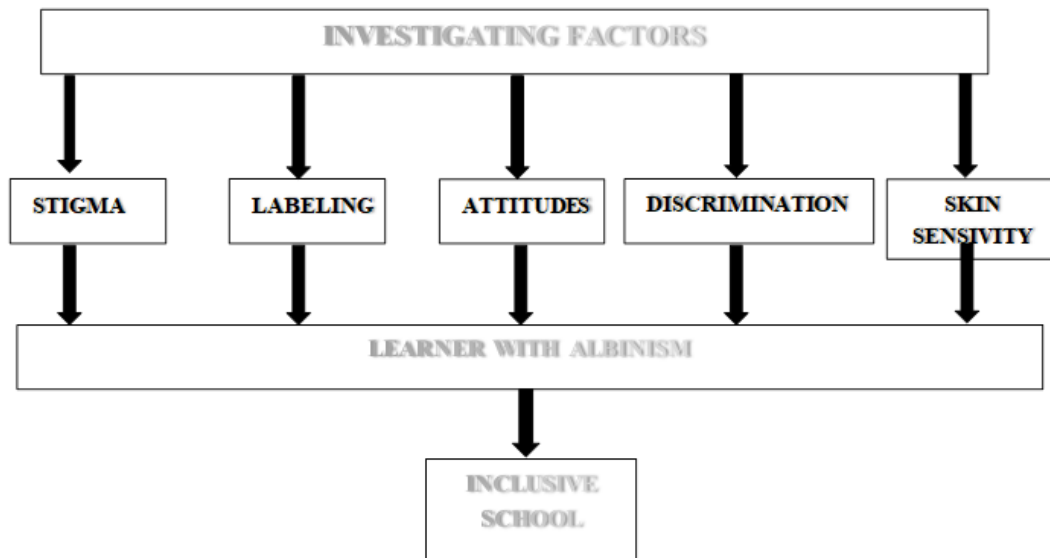


Fig.1 A diagrammatic representation of conceptual framework of factors affecting learners with albinism in inclusive school

References

Source: Researcher

This conceptual framework will be effective in the master's ongoing study because it is on understanding factors affecting learners with albinism in inclusive schools. The arrows show a reflective path that the researcher will adopt throughout research process. The framework starts with the exploring the meaning of stigma, then followed by its four factors namely stigma, discrimination, attitudes, labeling, and skin sensitivity. Thereafter, the framework will end with explanations on the learner with albinism and inclusive schooling. Regarding learners with albinism the aspects of stigma, discrimination, attitudes, labeling, and skin sensitivity will be used as a guide in identifying how these learners are affected in inclusive schools during the master's ongoing study.

The subsequent paragraphs therefore, try to explain how involving stigma, labeling, attitudes, discrimination and skin sensitivity can be used in identifying learners with albinism and how these learners are affected in an inclusive school.

Stigma

Stigma is a powerful social process of devaluing people or groups based on a real or perceived difference such as, class, race, and behavior. Stigma is used by dominant groups to create, legitimize, and perpetuate social inequalities and exclusion (Ogden and Nyblade, 2005). Stigma leads to discrimination, which is unfair and unjust treatment of an individual based on that socially identified status. The stigma attached to learners with albinism is usually a source of great anguish and shame to affected individuals (king, et al. 1996), as a result of stigma some learners may not go to school because of the belief that children with albinism are retarded, cannot compete favorably with other children and therefore cannot succeed in life.

Labeling

Labeling is a process of creating descriptors to identify persons who differ from the norm. a label or tag is given to anyone who is different in some way from someone else. A label is usually degrading in nature, the very visible difference in appearance of the learners with albinism leads to bad labels resulting to poor social integration among peers. A myriad of myths and superstitions surround the condition leads to stigmatization, rejection and a lack of understanding about albinism (Baker et al., 2010; Braathen and Ingstad, 2006) For example, in Tanzania, learners with albinism are labeled as Mzungu (white person) zeruzeru (ghost) in School by peers (Brocco, 2015). Furthermore, Mandyata, (2012) adds that

assigning labels to children in education systems usually brings about negative effects including stigmatization, peer rejection, lower self-esteem, lower expectations, and limited opportunities.

Attitude

An attitude is defined as a psychological tendency to view a particular object or behavior with a degree of favor or disfavor. Attitudes are understood to be formed through a process of individual subjective evaluation (Albarracin et al. 2005). According to Selepe (2007), in her study of teenagers with albinism, notes that one of the result of negative attitudes learners with albinism experience in schools is name-calling. People have the attitude of naming things as to control them and therefore, the learners with albinism are called names so that they can control them. Furthermore, the negative attitude experienced by learners with albinism is that of being treated unfairly due to their skin color and they are called names that demean and humiliate them in school. According to Kasonde and Moberg, (2001), the attitudes of teachers, school administrators and peers affect the inclusion of children with disabilities like albinism in mainstream schools. Some school teachers, including head teachers, believe that they are not obliged to teach children with disabilities because they were not trained in special education. According to Chitiyo and Chitiyo (2007), attitudes may prevent learners with albinism or disabilities from accessing education if they are secluded. Such societal isolation has total disregard for the educational and economic needs, or human rights of learners with albinism (Chitiyo, 2006). Therefore, negative attitudes are a major obstacle to the education of learners with albinism in inclusive schools.

Discrimination

Discrimination is showing of favor, prejudice, or bias for or against a person on any arbitrary grounds, for example on the basis of sex, color, culture, and language (Albarracin et al. 2005). Discrimination against persons with albinism is reportedly a worldwide issue. While the degree, scope and severity vary from country to country, there is a common thread of bullying of school-aged children. In most Sub-Saharan Africa countries, learners with albinism routinely face prejudice, stigmatization, and multiple and interrelated forms of discrimination based on color, visual impairment and age. Such discrimination is based on myths and misconceptions about the causes of albinism. These myths include that persons who are albinos are ghosts, furthermore it is stated that albinism is the result of a curse. Learners with albinism are often demeaned and are given

derogatory names that suggest they are lesser beings because of their appearance (International Bar Association, 2017).

Skin sensitivity

Skin sensitivity is a condition characterized by stinking, burning and itching sensations. Skin sensitivity is a sensory reaction triggered by contactors and environmental factors without a visible clinical manifestation (Goldvosky et al. 2006). Gaigher, et al (2002) were of the opinion that learners with albinism should be isolated from outdoor activities like sports during sunny days due to their sensitive skin. Poee-Monyemore (2007) postulates that learners with albinism when exposed to direct sunshine, their melanin deficient skins develop wrinkles, lentigines, actinic keratosis, and epithelomata from which they may result in them dying early in adult life or in middle age. Due to skin senility during sun days learners with albinism may not take part in some school activities due to effects of sunrays and at times they are regarded by other learners and teachers teaching them as having pride of not wanting to be involved in out-door activities performed during Sun days.

Learners with Albinism

According to Lund (2007) albinism is a group of inherited conditions. Persons with albinism are characterized by the absence or reduced pigment in their eyes, skin or hair. Lund et al (2007) also pointed out that persons with albinism have inherited genes that do not make sufficient melanin, which is required for the full development of the retina which results in visual impairment.

Furthermore, an albino can be said to be a person with the condition of white skin, white air and pink eyes. Eyebrows and eyelashes are whitish. The person has rapid eye movements or jerking of the eyeball- which is as a result of the condition known as nystgmus caused due to too much light. **Nystagmus** is involuntary movement of the eyes that can cause fatigue when carrying out visual tasks such classroom activities in the case of learner with albinism. Nystagmus is associated with many eye conditions or it may be the only diagnosis identified by an ophthalmologist. In albinism albinos **rods are more active than cones** hence they see well where there is less light. In the normal eye, the retina in the area called macula two cells are found, these are the rods and cones. Cones are responsible for fine clear vision while rods for peripheral vision or dim kind of vision. Learners or persons with albinism may have reduced or poor visual acuity, sensitivity to light. sensitive to sunburn, skin lesions and cancers large refractive errors, and a lack of binocular vision. They may also have social problems and communication because most of the time they get second hand information. Usually they dependent on others. They have mobility problems. They may have very little experience with the environment due to social isolation.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is central to the present thinking and it is the approach towards learning, which is termed as “inclusive learning“. Special Education fall under an umbrella term called the philosophy of inclusive education. Inclusive education is where learners with disabilities learn together with learners without disabilities from the same teacher, using the same curriculum, teaching and learning materials, teaching and learning methods, study the same subjects, take the same examinations and obtain the same educational qualifications

It is a move towards creating educational environments; concentrating on understanding better how learners with special needs learn so that they can be better helped to learn and be first and foremost seen as learners (Tomlinson, 1996). It is education system that calls for the school to modify the learning environment to suit the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities such that they are able to learn in regular schools together with peers.

The learners with albinism learning in an inclusive school are affected in their education if the aspects of stigma, labeling,

attitudes, discrimination and skin sensitivity are not taken care of by other learners and teachers teaching them.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion, the paper concludes that the stigma model and conceptual-framework can be used as one of the model in identifying factors affecting learners with albinism in inclusive schools in Zambia. It involves stigma, labeling, attitudes, discrimination and skin sensitivity. Thus the aspect of stigma will be a guide in identifying those who stigmatize these learners. The aspect of labeling will be a guide in identifying how other learners relate with learners with albinism. Furthermore, the aspect of attitude will be a guide in identifying how teachers and pupils relate with these learners. Then the aspect of discrimination will be a guide in identifying if these learners will be discriminated and those who discriminate them. Finally, the aspect of skin sensitivity will be a guide in identifying if these learners are taken care of during outdoor activities by their fellow learners and the teachers teaching them.

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