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## **Helping Behaviour and Self-Esteem of the Helped in Inclusive Schooling: A Double-Edged Sword?**

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### **Abstract**

Despite the plethora of studies that have attempted to examine self-esteem in a variety of contexts, few studies have focused on investigating the self-esteem of students with visual impairments as a function of receiving help from their sighted peers within the context of inclusive schooling. Employing a qualitative approach, this study examines the ways sighted students assist their peers with visual impairments in an inclusive secondary school setting in relation to the self-esteem of the help-recipients. It does so, by highlighting the decision for seeking help and threat to self-esteem models. The findings have indicated that, sighted peers assisted their friends with visual impairments in a number of ways despite the fact that, some of the help-recipients were unsatisfied with the help given. Generally, students with visual impairments were comfortable seeking assistance from their sighted peers, with high self-esteem levels despite the concerns raised. Finally, discussions of these findings and recommendations are provided.

**Keywords:** helping behaviour, inclusive schooling, qualitative study, self-esteem, visual impairment.

### **Introduction**

There has been global consensus that inclusive education is the appropriate education practice in the contemporary world. The reasons underlying this conclusion include, but are not limited to, the need for appreciation of individual differences and enhancing social cohesion among students with a view to making educational ends meet. This is because, whether in regular or in inclusive schools, the aim of schooling signified by the existence of schools, has always been facilitating students' learning (Santrock, 2006). In many countries, including Tanzania, learning for students with disabilities has had been confronted by many challenges (Blacket al., 2015; Espelage et al., 2015; Spooner, Browder, 2015; Tuomi et al., 2015; Westbrook, Croft, 2015). Thus, efforts towards addressing such challenges are important in order to achieve equity in education in Tanzania. As a means of achieving this educational goal, an emphasis on nurturing positive social behaviours among

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key education stakeholders such students cannot be underestimated. The positive social behaviours have the potential for developing positive social view of others, useful social skills, a sense of individual differences, and caring for one another which may bring about supportive relationships among students in schools. Helping behaviour is one of those useful social behaviours for human existence as social beings (Lefevor et al., 2017; Melis, 2018; Paley, 2014).

The existence of helping behaviour among students in this era of inclusive schooling may contribute to efforts required to achieve education for all more successfully. Arguably, in order to make students with disabilities have equal access, participation and finally succeed in education in inclusive schools like those without disabilities, support, which may be realized through the help from their peers and teachers in the context of learning, remains significant. In this context, nurtured with helping behaviour, students without disabilities would be in a position to assist their disabled counterparts in the course of learning. The context of understanding this study, that was conducted to find out how the sighted students assist their peers with visual impairments in an inclusive secondary school in Tanzania. Also, it was the aim of this research to uncover the level of self-esteem among the students being assisted.

The available social psychological literature indicates that, both seeking and receiving help can be regarded as a double-edged sword as, under certain conditions they may be threatening experiences to the help-recipient. This is because, people may be grateful for receiving help and on one hand they may experience negative feelings when they are helped, including lowered self-esteem (Horowitz, Bordens, 1995; Feigin et al., 2014). Fisher et al. as cited in Horowitz and Bordens (1995) point out to four possible negative outcomes of receiving help; creation of inequitable relationship between the helper and help-recipient, threatened freedom of the help-recipient, making negative attributions about the intent of the helpers by the help-recipient and a loss of self-esteem of the help-recipient.

The threat to self-esteem model states that, individuals may refuse accepting help because doing so threatens their self-esteem (Horowitz, Bordens, 1995). This experience is determined by various factors such as the type of task requiring help (easy vs difficulty), and the source of the help (friends vs strangers) (Bordens, Horowitz, 2008). Like helping; seeking help involves incurring some costs (Bordens, Horowitz, 2008; DePaulo, Fisher, 1980). Simply put; someone is more likely to seek help when their needs are low, he or she seek help from a friend when the cost involved is high. Help-seeking may be associated with some form of social stigma coupled with feelings of failure. Given such circumstances, like when a person decides to give help to someone, in deciding whether to seek for help, an individual undergoes a series of decision making processes which involve self-questioning (Bordens, Horowitz, 2008). Gross and McMullen, as cited in Bordens and Horowitz (2008), contend that a person asks three questions before seeking help; a) Do I have a problem that help will alleviate? b) Should I seek help? c) Who is most capable of providing the kind of help I need? Generally, one's decision to receive help is determined by both situational and personality variables.

Various researches and in different contexts have examined self-esteem, which is generally referred to as how people perceive themselves, as persons in which those with a high level of it possess a positive view of themselves and vice-versa (Trautwein, Lu¨dtke, Ko¨ller, Baumert, 2006), from time to time in areas of psychological and educational sciences. Peleg (2009) explored differences in test anxiety and self-esteem between adolescents with learning disabilities and those without them and generally found that those with learning disabilities had higher levels of test anxiety and lower levels of self-esteem as compared to their nondisabled peers.

In another study, Ales, Rappo and Pepi (2012) found that children with dyslexia, reading comprehension disabilities, and mathematical disabilities had lower ratings of self-esteem at school and employed more self-handicapping strategies than children whose learning was normal. On the other hand, Klein (2017) who conducted a study testing whether helping other people can increase helpers' perceptions of meaning in life and found that, individuals' personal worth and self-esteem which enhanced their view of having meaningful life was linked to their prosocial tendencies.

Further to that, literature has shown the correlation between students' self-esteem and their school achievements. Self-esteem is related to academic achievement and social functioning of individuals (Hisken, 2011; Prihadi, Chua, 2012). Low self-esteem is likely to prevent students from tackling difficult issues or feel satisfied with their progress and success (Hisken, 2011). Baumeister,

Campbell, Krueger and Vohs (2003) report that, it is not always the case that students' high self-esteem leads to good school performance but rather high self-esteem is partly the result of good school performance. But generally, people's high self-esteem enhances their self-initiatives and pleasant feelings towards some tasks (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Based on the brief review of literature, this study extends on studying helping behaviour and self-esteem in educational settings by considering disability issues and inclusion. It was of interest to determine the level of self-esteem of the students with visual impairment in relation to the assistance they receive from their sighted peers. It also sought to find out whether students with visual impairment were comfortable seeking and receiving help from their sighted peers in an inclusive secondary school setting. To this end, the study addressed four questions;

1. What types of assistance do sighted students offer their peers with visual impairment in an inclusive secondary school setting?

2. How is the helping behaviour of the sighted students towards their peers with visual impairment enhanced in an inclusive secondary school setting?

3. How comfortable are students with visual impairment receiving assistance from their sighted peers in an inclusive secondary school setting?

4. What level of self-esteem do the helped students with visual impairment have in an inclusive secondary school setting?

## **Methods**

### ***Type of study, sample and sampling techniques***

This study used a qualitative approach employing an embedded single case study research design. Case studies are advantageous in that, they can be used to bring out the details of a phenomenon from the view points of the participants by using multiple sources of data as determined by the situations in which the data is collected (Denscombe, 2007; Tellis, 1997). The use of case study designs enhances the rigour of a study through triangulation (Denscombe, 2007). Denscombe views the case study approach as relevant to small-scale studies that concentrate on one or a few research sites. The present study was conducted in one secondary school. This enhanced an in-depth analysis of the helping behaviour of the sighted students in that setting through interviews and focus group discussions.

The participants included teachers, students with visual impairment and sighted students. Specifically, the headmaster provided information about sighted students' prosocial behaviour and the strategies used by the school to promote them in his school. Both regular and special education teachers provided information about the strategies they use, and that used by the school, in enhancing students' helping behaviour in this school.

Involving students with visual impairment was central to this study. These students experience several challenges in inclusive school while accessing education. This, unquestionably, makes them seek assistance from their sighted peers. In this study, they provided information pertaining to their comfort level in seeking and receiving help from their sighted peers. They also provided information about their self-esteem levels within the inclusive settings. Should there be any costs incurred by these students while seeking assistance from their sighted peers, the students with VI were important sources of this information.

To select the participants for this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed in which two types of purposive sampling technique were used; *criterion* and *snowball* sampling. Whereas criterion sampling occurs when a researcher samples all units (cases or individuals) that meet a particular criterion and snowball sampling is done when a researcher uses few initially sampled participants to mention other participants relevant to the research in question (Bryman, 2012). Through criterion sampling, the researcher selected the headmaster, regular and special education teachers and students with visual impairment. On the other hand, snowball sampling technique was used to select the sighted students who participated in this study. The students with VI were employed in carrying out this exercise.

### ***Data collection methods and procedures involved***

#### ***Interviews and focus group discussions***

It is worth noting that the first author was involved in collecting all the data in the field. As a data collection method, interviews are highly useful in gathering information, if a study involves

exploration of more complex and subtle phenomena (Denscombe, 2007). In this study, semi-structured and unstructured face-to-face personal interviews were used to collect data from the headmaster, the teachers and the students in order to make them free to express their views to maintain confidentiality. Specifically, the following necessitated the use of personal interviews.

First, given his position, the headmaster was interviewed individually. Secondly, students with visual impairment were interviewed individually to ensure anonymity. Ensuring the anonymity of these respondents was important because it was thought that they would still need the help of their sighted counterparts after the study. Thirdly, the teachers were interviewed individually so that they could feel free to express their views about the sighted students' attitudes towards the visually impaired students, especially if the former offered help to the latter when asked to do so. This took the form of *unstructured interviewing* in order to allow flexibility in gathering the required data. Unstructured interviewing was also used to probe the sighted students on similar issues as the teachers.

Focus group discussions enable a researcher to collect data from a group of people, typically four to six (Creswell, 2012). Like interviews for example, focus groups discussions are flexible and appropriate in gathering data on social phenomena. The focus group discussions were held with the students with visual impairment for practically all of them experience similar challenges at the school. They provided information on how they were helped by and interacted with the sighted peers. The comfort that the students felt was also looked into. Two focus group discussions were held, each consisted of five participants. The criterion used in selecting the participants was how the visually impaired students related to each other. To ensure anonymity of their views, the participants were insisted upon not to name or imply any of their sighted peers during the discussions. It may be pointed out that, the interviews and focus group discussions allowed flexibility in what could be discussed or asked, as it was possible to rephrase the questions.

All the interviews and focus group discussions were held at the school where the study was conducted. They were conducted in Kiswahili so that, the respondents could participate fully. Appointments with the teachers were made because they had overcharged calendars. The researcher interviewed the teachers in their offices, school corridors and in the resource room for the visually impaired students. Eight interviews were held with teachers, because it was noted that no new data could be collected. Indeed, with qualitative research, a researcher can be satisfied with the amount of data collected when a saturation point is reached when collecting data (Bryman, 2012; Kumar, 2005).

The interview with the headmaster was held in his office. Most of students' interviews were conducted in the resource room for the visually impaired students. Other interviews were conducted in selected places outside the classrooms. These places were conducive for the purpose. Eight interviews were held with the students. This was because with the eight interviews, redundancy in the data being gathered was noticed. Note books and a voice recorder were used to record data during the interviews and focus group discussions. After interviews and focus group discussions, the data were arranged in meaningful formats to ease further analysis.

#### *Observation*

Observation is a research technique used to verify or nullify information provided in face-to-face encounters (Hancock, 1998). Yin (2011) contends that, observations increase the chance for the researcher to obtain a valid and realistic picture of the phenomenon being studied. In qualitative research, observations rely on words to describe the setting, the behaviours and the interactions with a view to understanding them (Ary et al., 2010). The researcher used non-participant observations to collect data on how the students with visual impairments were being helped. During the fieldwork, in-class and out-of-class observations were made for a period of two weeks. The school time table determined the time of making in-class observations. The observations were made so as to determine helping behaviour of the sighted students. In particular, the researcher observed, among others, the kind of help that the sighted students provided to their peers with visual impairments, overall interactions and relationships between the two groups of students.

### Questionnaires

After consultation with the headmaster and introductory remarks to students, 11 questionnaires were distributed to students with visual impairments. The sighted students helped them complete the questionnaires. At the end of the exercise, all the questionnaires were collected. Closed-ended questionnaires were used in this study. Creswell (2012) notes that closed-ended questionnaires are effective means of obtaining useful information for supporting theories and concepts reviewed in a given study. To determine whether students with visual impairments were comfortable asking the sighted students for help and their levels of self-esteem, the students completed a closed-ended questionnaire. Their comfort was measured using Likert scale questionnaires that consisted of seven items.

The students were asked to either agree or disagree with what had been stated in each item on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). If a student agreed with items 1, and 7 and disagreed with items 2, 3 and 5 (as they appear in the results section), then the student was comfortable asking the non-visually students for help. On the other hand, if the student disagreed with items 6 and 7 and agreed with items 2, 3 and 5 (as they appear in results section), then the student was not comfortable asking the sighted students for help. If a student agreed with item number 4, then the student was uncomfortable asking the sighted students for help and vice versa. To measure or assess the students' levels of self-esteem, students with visual impairments completed a questionnaire with seven statements. The statements were adapted from a *global self-esteem questionnaire* (Larsen & Buss, 2005). According to Larsen and Buss (2005), 'high scores on self-esteem are obtained by answering items 1 to 4 as *true* and items 5 to 7 as *false*' (p. 453), which implies higher self-esteem for the individual. In this study, the students were asked to indicate whether a statement was true or false. If a student indicated that items 1 to 4 were true and items 5 to 7 false, then the student's level of self-esteem was high and vice versa.

### Data Analysis Procedures

The data obtained through interviews and observations were thematically analyzed, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke have identified six phases of data analysis; familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. The data presented in this study was analyzed following the six phases. In the first phase, the data were transcribed and re-read. Then, the transcribed data were carefully coded and potential themes were collected and grouped based on their relationships. At this stage, the grouped themes were reviewed in order to generate a thematic map of the analysis. After that, definitions and names for each theme were produced. Finally, the most relevant data was selected and an informative report was produced. It should be pointed out, however, that the phases overlapped in some instances.

The data collected through interviews, focus group discussions and observations was first written in Kiswahili and then translated into English. After being translated, the data were meaningfully classified and cross-checked for errors. The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19. After collecting the completed questionnaires, the researcher assigned identification numbers to the questionnaires for easy reference. Then, the data was entered on the SPSS computer software. When the exercise of entering the data was complete, the frequencies and percentages were determined which were then interpreted as the findings of the study. These findings were presented using tables. To ease analysis and discussion of the findings, responses from the questionnaires were accordingly combined. That is, because of their similar semantic implications, responses for '*strongly disagree*' and '*disagree*' were taken to mean '*disagree*', and those for '*agree*' and '*strongly agree*' meant '*agree*' as they are used throughout in findings/results section.

## Results

### Theme 1: Types of Assistance Provided to Students with Visual Impairments

This study sought to establish the ways through which sighted students assist their peers with visual impairments in an inclusive school. After the analysis, the following themes emerged as the types of assistance sighted students offer their peers with visual impairments.

#### Subtheme 1: Mobility assistance

All the interviewed teachers pointed out that, the sighted students helped those with VI in a number of ways, including mobility assistance. This involved movement within the school

environment such as moving from the dormitories to the classrooms and vice versa, from the classrooms to the resource room and vice versa, from the dormitories to the resource room and vice versa and movement outside the school environment. When asked on the types of assistance that the sighted students offered those with VI, one teacher noted that:

*They walk together and when they are in class they sit together. The sighted students assist those with visual impairment in class and in the dormitories. After class hours, they go to the resource room where the sighted students read for the students with VI (Responses from an interview).*

#### *Subtheme 2: Assistance in academics*

With respect to academics, teachers' narratives were similar to the views expressed by some of the students with VI. The students talked about how they were assisted academically by their sighted counterparts. The students said that, very few sighted day students were willing to help their classmates with VI. The following are some of the accounts given by some of the students with VI on the academic assistance they received from their sighted peers:

*They simply don't like to read for us. The situation has been like that since I came to this school. There were two students who helped us read notes and books. Unfortunately, one of them has moved to another school. The other problem is that the sighted students don't lend us exercise books timely. One of our teachers talked to them about this issue but they haven't changed. If we get an exercise book, we work alone. Nobody assists us, I mean. Sometimes, if a teacher comes to teach us, we ask him/her for teaching notes, write and then return it (Responses from a Focus Group Discussion).*

The same student continued saying as follows:

*Yes, teachers say that those without visual impairment should help us read out notes. But if you ask someone to read for you she agrees reluctantly. Hence she reads things that are not accurate. That being the case, we decide to read the notes ourselves. I mean, the students with albinism do so for us (Responses from a Focus Group Discussion).*

#### *Subtheme 3: Daily living assistance*

During the face to face interviews, most of the teachers and students indicated that the sighted students helped their counterparts with VI put on their clothes and clean their bedrooms. With regard to this kind of help, one of the teachers noted that:

*They assist them in many ways. For example, a sighted student can help a student with visual impairment put on her clothes. But nobody washes clothes for them. Just to make them aware that they should appear properly dressed before others (Responses from an interview).*

It was further capitalized by teachers that, sighted students and those with VI noted that students with VI were being assisted by their sighted counterparts while performing recreational activities within the school; *Recreational-related assistance*. It was noted that, during graduation ceremonies for example, the sighted students and those with VI composed poems, songs and drama plays together. This suggests that the former helped the latter.

#### *Subtheme 4: Social and emotional support*

Through interviews, it was further found that sighted students provided social and emotional support to their peers with VI. This made them see the general school atmosphere as positive to them. Additionally, the sighted students accompanied the students with VI to hospital. On this particular issue, one of the interviewed teachers noted that:

*Generally, the sighted students assist those with VI when in their dormitories. When it happens that one of the students with VI is sick, it is usually the sighted students who report to teachers. They also volunteer themselves to accompany the sick ones to the hospitals (Responses from an interview).*

## **Theme 2: Strategies Used to Enhance Helping Behaviour of Sighted Students in Inclusive Secondary School Settings**

### *Subtheme 1: Strategies by students with visual impairments*

Overall, the visually impaired students did not do anything that would make the non-disabled students help them. However, they believed that good relationships with their counterparts helped live peacefully and work together. Good relationships involved the students respecting each other; using good language and the like. The visually impaired students said that they always respected their non-disabled counterparts. Further, one of the students with visual impairment pointed out that more education should be given to the non-disabled students so that they can live peacefully with the visually impaired students. Specifically, the student said that, ‘...because some of the non-disabled students don’t have helping behaviour should be given seminars about how they can improve their relationships with us visually impaired students’ (Responses from an interview).

### *Subtheme 2: School level and teachers’ strategies*

Helping behaviour of the sighted students, as practiced in the school, is in fact taken as a matter of every day routine. The behaviour exists in the school. During the interviews, most of the teachers and students said that there was no strategy in place to promote the prosociality of the non-disabled students. However, some of the teachers and students referred to the school’s provision of material rewards to the students who helped the students with disabilities. The rewards such as certificates were given during graduation ceremonies. For example, one of the teachers noted that the rewards motivated the students without disabilities to assist their visually impaired counterparts.

It was also pointed out that most teachers equated motivation for students who acted prosocially towards their visually impaired counterparts with monetary incentives, even though the school had no money to give the students. The school administration tells the students during *school barazas* to recognize their individual differences and ask them to help each other.

Additionally, most of the teachers said that they used the strategies below to make the students without disabilities to help those with disabilities.

*Subtheme 3: Advising and encouragement:* Advising and encouraging the non-disabled students to assist those with disabilities, including the students with visual impairment was among the ways used by the teachers to make the students without disabilities help those with disabilities. It involved educating the non-disabled students on the importance of helping their visually impaired counterparts. For example, one of the teachers said, “*In order to enhance helping behaviour among the non-disabled students, I underscore the importance of helping the students with disabilities.*”

This view is similar to the view expressed by another teacher who said he instilled help-giving attitude in the non-disabled students. The teacher said, “*I help the students develop a positive attitude towards their fellows with visual impairment. I also tell them not to stigmatize the visually impaired students.*”

As a means of promoting helping and/or humanistic virtues among the non-disabled students such as patience, tolerance and sympathy, one of the teachers said, “*I insist to the non-disabled students when helping the students with visual impairment that they should be patient, tolerant and sympathetic towards their friends*”

Yet another teacher pointed out that:

*We talk to them on the importance to assist those with visual impairment. Usually the teacher in charge of the dormitories talks to them, especially to those who are willing to help the students with disabilities. We usually tell all students that they should regard those with disabilities as normal students, and that they should not stigmatize them. We do this in order to make the students live together peacefully, it reduces a sense of segregation among them (Responses from an interview).*

It was further reported that during orientation period non-disabled students were informed of the existence of visually impaired students in the school so that they could develop a positive attitude towards them. In relation to this, one of the teachers said, “*I counsel them and tell them that they may also have disabilities.*”

*Subtheme 4: The kind of comfort felt by students with visual impairments*

This study analyzed the self-esteem of students with visual impairment in inclusive setting. It sought to establish whether the students with visual impairment were comfortable seeking the help of their sighted counterparts. The aim was to find out the patterns of behaviour and acceptability of the visually impaired students to their sighted counterparts. It was hoped that the comfort or discomfort the students felt would enable to establish how the sighted students assisted their peers with visual impairments.

Table 1 summarizes the results regarding the comfort of the students with visual impairments felt.

**Table 1.** Visually impaired students’ kind of comfort derived from the assistance they get from the sighted students (N=11)

Item	Response			
	Disagree		Agree	
	Number	%	Number	%
1. I am comfortable seeking academic assistance from any sighted student.	-	-	11	100
2. I sometimes feel indebted to a student who may have offered me assistance.	8	72.7	3	27.3
3. I sometimes feel inferior when seeking and receiving assistance from sighted students.	8	72.7	3	27.3
4. I sometimes feel bad when I am not able to reciprocate the assistance provided to me by a sighted friend.	1	9.1	10	90.1
5. I hesitate to ask someone to help with something even when I face difficulties.	6	54.6	5	45.4
6. I usually seek assistance from specific students, and not everybody.	4	36.4	7	63.7
7. I deserve to be assisted by my friends; so I feel good when they assist me.	1	9.1	10	90.1

**Theme 3: Level of self-esteem among students with VI in inclusive settings**

The data regarding the level of self-esteem for students with visual impairments were gathered using questionnaires. The summary of data gathered to determine the level of self-esteem for these students in inclusive secondary school settings is presented in Table 2.



**Table 2.** Responses of Self-Esteem among Students with VI (N=11)

Item	Response			
	True		False	
	Number	%	Number	%
1. I feel good about myself in this school.	11	100	-	-
2. I feel I am a person of worth, the equal of other students in this school.	11	100	-	-
3. I am able to do things as well as most other students.	7	63.6	4	36.4
4. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	9	81.8	2	18.2
5. I certainly feel useless at times.	2	18.2	9	81.8
6. At times I think am not good at all.	1	9.1	10	90.9
7. I think I do not have much to be proud of.	2	18.2	9	81.8

### Discussion

This study has attempted to establish how sighted students assist their peers with visual impairments in an inclusive secondary school setting. In line with the research questions to which the study addressed itself, a number of things have been revealed.

Firstly, it has been indicated that sighted students assisted their peers with visual impairments in academics, social and emotional aspects. However, it has been found that the majority of sighted students were, at times, unwilling to assist their peers with visual impairments. It can be learned that the assistance that sighted students offer their peers with visual impairments is insufficient. This constrains learning for students with visual impairments in those settings, especially when such students do not report many of the cases when their peers do not assist them. With regard to these findings, contradictory views are observed between students' and teachers' narratives (Kef, Deković, 2004).

The findings showed that some of the students, who were not assisted by their sighted counterparts, did not report the problem to the school administration. It is clear that while sighted students reported some undesirable behaviours of students with VI cases, when students with VI missed assistance were hardly reported. It is logical to establish that many students with VI could not report such cases because the assistance was voluntarily given (part of the findings have been reported elsewhere). Interestingly, students with visual impairments were taking initiatives in carrying out some social roles and tasks on their own with minimal assistance if need be. Consequently, it might be correct to argue that the students with VI do not depend solely on their sighted counterparts. Indeed, they need to be trained on a number of things. Training would make them independent than they are. This is not to say, however, the students should not be helped.

Secondly, various strategies by students with visual impairments, teachers and the school administration have been found to enhance helping behaviour of sighted students in inclusive settings. For instance, the students with visual impairments developed good relationships with their sighted counterparts as a means of sustaining assistance from their sighted peers. However, most of the students with disabilities may lack appropriate social skills within inclusive schools. This is likely to make such students less popular and have fewer friends with minimal participation in groups to which they are members (Frostad, Pijl, 2007). Having appropriate social skills is one of the essential factors for selecting friends and being accepted in groups of educational value in inclusive schooling (Pijl et al., 2011). It is important that special training on these skills to these

students must be initiated and promoted in inclusive schools. Such trainings in fact should be extended to students without disability for better results as it has been found that such students too lack similar skills in such settings congruent with regarding the need for interventions geared towards addressing the social behaviours of all students in order to make schools more inclusive (Schwab et al., 2015).

Generally, the school administration and the teachers made use of advice and encouragement to promote cooperation and interaction between the sighted students and those with visual impairments. In this case, some teachers reported that in trying to make the sighted students help their peers with visual impairments employed teaching approaches that allowed the students with visual impairment work together with those without disabilities; cooperation and social interaction enhancement strategy. This was a means of making sure that the students cooperated in various activities. The finding suggests that despite the challenges relating to the teaching of inclusive classes, teachers have to realize the need of adjusting their teaching methods to suit inclusive teaching and learning situations. Cooperative learning which is among the strategies advocated for teaching inclusive classes should be emphasized among teachers as it increases social interactions among the students (Kamps et al., 1994). It also enhances learners' academic achievement in inclusive classrooms (Kamps et al., 1994; Fuchs et al., 1997).

There is some evidence that cooperative learning improves the self-esteem of special and remedial students (Jenkins et al., 2003). Arguably, this may partly explain the existence of higher levels of self-esteem among students with visual impairments; it is therefore worth promoting in inclusive teaching. Ultimately, students' helping behaviour and their academic achievements would also be enhanced. However, it is crucial to underline here that teachers are likely to make use of cooperative learning strategies if they are exposed to both the theoretical and practical experiences of these strategies during their initial teacher training (Duran et al., 2017). This reiterates the need for making the strategies an integral component of teacher preparation in Tanzania.

Generally, most of the teachers said that, they usually advised and encouraged the sighted students to assist their peers with visual impairments. Such advice and encouragement consolidated the prosocial behaviour of the helping students in some ways. Also, some of them pointed out that, to some extent, the school administration had played an important role to this end. Insistently, developing inclusive educational leadership and culture is of particular significance in Tanzania, especially with regard to promoting helping behaviour of all those involved in inclusive schools. The development and sustainability of inclusive education practices are partly dependent upon effective inclusive educational leadership and culture. The reason being that the development of more inclusive approaches requires collaborative efforts within particular organization in which leaders are essential in building organizational culture which allows for social learning which supports inclusive education best practices (Ainscow, Sandill, 2010; Zollers, Ramanathan, Yu, 1999). Promoting helping behaviour among students is one step, based on this paper, towards achieving inclusive education in its broader sense in the country.

Thirdly, this study assessed the comfort level of students with visual impairments resulting from being assisted by their sighted peers. The findings have indicated that the students with visual impairments were comfortable seeking assistance of their sighted counterparts. However, the data also show the majority of the students indicated that, their failure to reciprocate the assistance given to them made them feel bad, implying that such students were not comfortable seeking assistance from their sighted peers. There might be some other factors contributing to students being uncomfortable seeking assistance from their peers and even other members within the school and wider community. For instance, it is established that one's willingness to seek help can be affected by the way help-givers react to help-seekers. Certainly, those experiencing negative reactions from help-givers are likely to be less willing to seek assistance in future and thereby compromising further opportunities to provide needed services to such students as reported by Hartman-Hall and Haaga (2002).

While the former observation contradicts the data which was obtained through interviews, during which some of the students claimed that the majority of the sighted students were not willing to offer help to their peers with visual impairments, the latter observation signals the effects of the existed asymmetrical relationships between visually impaired students and the sighted ones. It should be kept in mind that, the nature of the students (those with partial vision and boarding

students; part of the results reported elsewhere) who willingly assisted the students with visual impairments may be one of the reasons why there is a contradiction between the two kinds of data.

Finally, regarding the level of self-esteem among students with visual impairment, the findings have indicated that, the majority of these students had high levels of self-esteem except a few of them. It may be argued that, the high levels of self-esteem shown by these students imply that they understand and accept their disabling condition. Also, it is possible that the help they received from their sighted counterparts and from the students with albinism made them accept their condition, for it is said that peers influence each other's self-esteem. It is also possible that the academic performance of the students with visual impairment will be good, for it said that a positive self-esteem helps enhance one's academic performance (Hisken, 2011).

However, the findings have indicated that some of the students with visual impairment have low self-esteem as such students indicated that at times they felt as being useless with nothing to be proud of. This has two implications; the existence of some form of negative attitudes towards students with visual impairment and inability of students with visual impairment to accept their condition. Therefore, the school administration should bear in mind that although there are good students devoted in assisting those with visual impairment, the implicit forms of undesirable behaviours of some other sighted students towards their peers with visual impairments exist in the school. Deliberate efforts should be taken against such behaviours if a more inclusive school community has to be developed. One way of achieving this, is through the promotion of values of equity and social justice in schools and wider community. When developed, as highlighted by Ballard (2013), social justice values are likely to enhance supportive and caring school environment for all leading to a sustainable future of inclusive education in the country.

### **Conclusion**

Inclusive education is supported and implemented in many countries. It is indisputable that its implementation is faced with a number of challenges in Tanzania, but the helping behaviour of students in inclusive settings may lead to the success of the education for all initiatives. The present study sought to analyze the helping behaviour of sighted students in relation to the help they offer their peers with visual impairments in inclusive secondary school settings. Generally, the findings have indicated that sighted students helped their peers with visual impairments in a number of ways, and the helped were comfortable seeking assistance from their sighted peers which in turn made them have high levels of self-esteem. While this might not be the sole determinant of students' self-esteem in the study context, the study capitalizes on the need to understand students' social behaviour for a better understand of social factors that might facilitate or impeded learning of students in inclusive schooling contexts. Unquestionably, this is one of the few studies that have ever focused on social behaviour of students at that level of education in the country

Thus, the study informs the readers on the kinds of assistance that sighted students provide to their visually impaired counterparts. It has revealed the strategies used to enhance helping behaviour of the sighted students and the comfort and self-esteem levels of students with visual impairments in inclusive settings. Despite its strengths, the study suffers from two main limitations. The first is, its limited sample size which could not allow sophisticated statistical analyses procedures to determine the effect of and/or the relationship between receiving help and the self-esteem of help-recipients. The second is that the study did not investigate the self-esteem of the sighted peers (helpers) in the inclusive schooling context in relation to their help-giving behaviour which could have provided more insights into the *double-edged* nature of such behaviour.

### **Recommendations**

In light of the noted limitations and the general findings of this study, the following are recommended;

1. This study was conducted in one research site with a smaller sample size, thus, a quantitative study is recommended in future to address similar issues. In such a study, the self-esteem of those providing help should be examined as well.
2. Students with visual impairment completed questionnaires with the help of their sighted friends. It could have been better if the questionnaires were in form of braille print that could allow these students complete the questionnaires on their own, because doing so could make them feel

free in completing them. Therefore, future research should be done in similar contexts addressing this shortfall.

3. The helping behaviour among sighted students has been found to be important in increasingly diverse classrooms. Therefore, it is important to have clearly stated mechanisms of promoting this type of behaviour to students and other members of school community in order to develop a sense of helping, which in turn will stimulate the appreciation of individual differences in educational settings.

### Conflicts of interest

The author declares no financial conflicts of interest.

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