

**CHALLENGES FACED BY AUTISTIC LEARNERS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS
OF KAKAMENGA DISTRICT IN WESTERN PROVINCE**

BY

WAMALWA GEORGE RAPANDO

BED/ 15827/ 71/ DF

**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF OPEN AND
DISTANCE LEARNING IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
AWARD OF A BACHELORS DEGREE WITH SPECIAL
NEEDS IN EDUCATION OF KAMPALA
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

SEPTEMBER 2009

DECLARATION

I **WAMALWA GEORGE RAPANDO**, do declare that this is my original work and has never been submitted to any Institution or University of higher learning for any award.

Signature..... .....

WAMALWA GEORGE RAPANDO

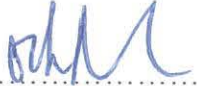
Date..... 6/10/2009.....

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father Mathew Wamalwa Rapando for his love of education.

APPROVAL

This report resulting from the researcher's effort in the area, challenges faced by autistic learners in selected schools of Kakamenga District in Western Province was carried out under my supervision and my final approval and it is now ready for submission for award of a Degree of Bachelor of special needs in Education.

Supervisor.....

MR. OCHEN MOSES PATRICK

Date.....

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am grateful to the office of Admissions of Kampala International University for admitting me to pursue a course in the field of a Degree of Bachelor of special needs in Education.

Special thanks go to my wife Phoembe Namatasi, my son Griffin Kigen and my daughter Georgina Kasamani for their support and encouragement during my studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
APPROVAL.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	2
1.3 Purpose of the study.....	3
1.4 Research objectives.....	3
1.5 Scope.....	3
1.6 Significance of the study.....	4
1.7 Research questions.....	4
CHAPTER TWO.....	5
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
2.0 Introduction.....	5
2.1 Definition.....	5

2.2 Characteristics of autistic	5
2.3 Challenges faced by autistic learners.....	7
CHAPTER THREE.....	10
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	10
3.0 Introduction.....	10
3.1 Research design.....	10
3.2 Study population.....	10
3.3 Sample framework.....	11
3.3.1 Sample size.....	11
3.3.2 Sample technique.....	11
3.4 Methods for data collection.....	11
3.4.1 Instruments.....	11
3.4.2 Source of data.....	11
3.4.3 Data collection procedure.....	12
3.5 Data processing and analysis.....	12
3.6 Limitations of the study.....	12
CHAPTER FOUR.....	13
DATA PRESENTATIONS, ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	13
4.0 Introduction.....	13
4.1 Characteristics of autistics learners.....	13
4.2 Challenges faced by autistic learners.....	14

4.3 The effects of autistic learners.....	14
CHAPTER FIVE.....	15
5.0 Introduction.....	15
5.1 Discussion.....	15
5.2 Conclusion.....	15
5.3 Recommendations.....	16
REFERENCES.....	17
APPENDENCES.....	19
QUESTIONNAIRES JULY-AUGUST 2009.....	19

ABSTRACT

The study was basically on challenges faced by autistic learners in selected schools of Kakamenga District in Western Province.

The main objective was to examine the effects of challenges to autistic learners and to identify the possible solutions to overcome these challenges.

The research objectives were tested by means of questionnaires, documentation and observations, the researcher discovered that most of these autistic learners are being neglected.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Before scientific study of the child, questions about children were answered by turning to common sense, opinion and belief. Laura (2001). This indicates that there was nothing proven to rely on in understanding and handling of children. This gave rise to a lot of guesswork about what takes place to children from conception to adulthood.

According to Laura (2001), systematic research on children did not begin until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Gradually it led to construction of theories of child development, to which professionals and parents could turn for understanding and guidance.

Many years later, researchers concentrated on the different categories of children. This gave rise to the realization of children with autism, who were oftenly mistaken to have mental challenges or emotional disorders. According to Lan (2002), during the 1940's and 1960's autism was considered by many professionals to mean emotional withdrawal in an otherwise normal child. It was in the late 60's that evidence began to accumulate that strongly suggested autism results from subtle forms of brain damage. This led to a shift of emphasis in the treatment of autism from medical therapy to education.

At present children with autism are taken to special schools and units to learn. As a result of these advances, many learners with autism have made a fine progress. According to an (2002), with adequate assistance and support, some autistic learners are able to do some jobs and lead semi-independence lives.

However, in Kakamenga district of western province. The autistic learners face many hindrances and challenges in the special units. This situation denies the autistic learners the opportunity to fully benefit from these special units. The teachers on the other hand fail to achieve in the special units.

It is after this observation that the researchers want to find out the exact challenges faced by the autistic learners in special units in Kakamenga district.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Although autistic learners are taken care of educationally by attending lessons in special units, they face many challenges which hinder them from learning in Kakamenga district of western province.

Since such learners have brain disorder which interferes with social behaviours, communication, skills and their thinking ability, it becomes very difficult for teachers, peers, parents and the community at large to meet their needs and demands. More often than not autism manifests differently in different individuals therefore making their needs, demands and abilities to a very a great deal.

These challenges faced by autistic learners have therefore led to truancy, child abuse, child neglect, high ratio of school drop out and illiteracy among autistic children.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by autistic learners in selected schools of Kakamenga district. The research aims identifying the challenges, stating the effects of these challenges and stating the level of performance of the learners.

1.4 Research objectives

- 1) To identify characteristics of autistic learners
- 2) To assess the challenges faced by autistic learners
- 3) To examine the effects of these challenges on autistic learners
- 4) To establish possible solutions to overcome these challenges.

1.5 Scope

The study was carried out in Kakamenga district, Western Province of Kenya and the schools selected were:- Kakamenga Primary, Daisy Special School, Amalemba Special School and Township Primary School

It focused on challenges faced by autistic learners in selected schools of Kakamenga District in Western Province.

1.6 Significance of the study

The findings of this research study will help the teachers in special needs to identify the challenges faced by their learners. This will give the teachers a deeper understanding of who their learners are so that they can effectively plan and attend to the autistic learners.

These findings will also help the community to identify such learners and learn how to accommodate them in society.

The findings of these research will create awareness of importance of education for autistic learners to the community. This will make them see the need of taking autistic children to school.

This research findings will sensitise the siblings and peers of the autistic children to create understanding in them and help them to try to socialize and learn both in school and at home.

1.7 Research questions

1. What are the challenges faced by autistic learners?
2. What are the effects of these challenges faced by autistic learners in their education?
3. What effective measures can be taken to overcome these challenges faced by autistic learners?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the views that other researchers have put forward to explain the challenges faced by autistic learners in selected schools of Kakamenga District in Western Province

2.1 Definition

Autistic is a disorder of the brain in which social behavior, communication skills and thinking ability to develop normally (Lan 2002)

According to William L. (1996), autism is a condition marked by severe impairment of intellectual, social and emotional functioning.

According to Kauffman (1975), recommended that education should be for every body regardless of ones disabilities.

2.2 Characteristics of autistic

Isolations is one of the most prominent characteristics of autism. According to William (1996), the parents relate that the child seems not to know or care whether he is alone or in the company of others. Karen (1998) indicates the same when he writes, when engaged

in solitary play an autistic child can ignore external noises with relative ease. This shows that the autistic child is better placed on his own than with others around him/ her. According to Bauman (1994), withdrawal, unaffectionate and uninterested in people, parents and siblings is commonly seen in the autistic children.

Self stimulation is common among the autistic children. According to Lan (2002) the term autism came from a Greek word au-tos meaning :’self’ this refers to this self absorption quality. According to William (1996) a most striking kind of behavior in these children centres on very repetitive stereotyped acts, such as rocking their bodies when in a sitting position, flapping their hands at the wrists. The parents often report that their child has spent entire days gazing at his capped hands. This shows that such a child is mostly interested in his own body and activities. The rocking of their bodies and flapping their hands is more enjoyable and captures their full concentration.

At times the autistic learners seem to have a sensory deficit. According to William (1996), we may move directly in front of the child, smile and talk to him, yet he will act as if no one is there. We may not feel that the child is avoiding or ignoring us, but rather that he simply does not seem to see or hear.

Temper tantrums are often elicited by autistic learners. According to Dehlgren (1989), when an autistic learner was observed in class, he tossed objects across the pre-school classroom resulting in crashes. William (1996) writes, sometimes the child’s aggression will be directed outward against his parents or teachers in the most primitive

form of biting, scratching and kicking as cited above it is clear that the writers note situations of temper tantrums in autistic learners.

Language deficit is also common among the autistic learners. They use echolalic speech. According to Bauman (1994), there is a speech and language disorder among autistic children. They may learn to speak later or not at all, they may have odd and limited speech and most of them exhibit echolalia.

William (1996) writes, most of these children are mute; they do not speak, but they may hum or occasionally utter simple sounds. The speech of those who do talk may be echoes of other people's attempts to talk to them.

The learners also exhibit behavior deficiencies. According to William (1996), although the presence of certain behaviors is notable, it is equally striking to take note of many behaviors that the autistic child does not have. According to Koegel et al (1994), an autistic child made scary noises when he attempted to play with blocks when under observation. Bauman et al (1994) writes an autistic child exhibits a total resistance to change even something so minor as re-arrangement of furniture. This can lead to extreme behaviors to show rejection of the change.

2.3 Challenges faced by autistic learners

The autistic learners have a number of problems related to the brain function. This is because their major problem results from a disorder of the brain. According to Lan (2002), autism is a disorder of the brain in which social behavior, communication skill and

thinking ability fail to develop normally. The major challenges faced by autistic learners all originate from these three key areas named above as quoted from Lan.

The social interaction of the autistic learners is poor. It gives them a major challenge when they really want to join others but they can not express it. According to Dahlgren et al (1989), the autistic learner's interactional style consisted of making repeated ineffective attempts to join social groups. Interaction with others involved sometimes starting at them when they were performing an activity. Leary (1996) writes, an autistic child looks disturbed and shakes involuntarily and leaves that play area unable to join others. This shows the frustration these learners go through. They are very much willing to socialize but they can not express it thus failure to be understood.

According to Leary (1996), attempts at social interaction by autistic learners were also not self-sustained due to his delay in fine and gross motor development. The learners could be hands and legs can not make movements that will enable him to do so.

According to Bauman (1994), the autistic learners always parallel play with typically and a typical students for long. This means that these learners nurse their frustrations by playing a similar game or doing a similar activity with other children around him/ her but on his/ her own. This is at least seen as an attempt by the autistic learners to overcome their social interaction problem. According to Dahlgren et al (1989), the inability of autistic children to contribute to play inhibited others from including them in their social events. Children would always enjoy playing as they reciprocate or counter playing.

Naturally they end up moving away from others who can't make the play lively. The autistic learners therefore face segregation as a result of this.

Autistic learners also face many challenges due to poor communication skills or total lack of the skills. According to Karen (1998), the autistic learners use 'filler statement' to communicate, these statements do not grant them interaction with peers because they can't follow them up with a linking thought.

The autistic learners are therefore unable to express their desires and needs to other people, and other people can not also easily understand them. They almost live in a world of their own. According to Lan (2002), children with autism may also respond in strange ways to events and situations they encounter.

Their responses can be hurting since most of them are unable to describe what they are experiencing. Nearly half are mute; often those who can speak words say them in an unusual way.

Some of the teachers and learners who interact with the autistic learners get used to their movements and verbalizations, such that they even ignore them when they actually mean to be attended to. According to Dawson et al (1986), peers get accustomed to this behavior of the autistic children and generally ignore their verbalizations. This is a situation that is difficult to handle because some times there seems to be an understanding and thereafter there is not.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the methods that the researcher used to select the geographical areas, form which research was carried out and methods of selection of respondents. It also explains the methods used to collect process and analyze data.

3.1 Research design

This study followed a descriptive research design because the researcher used one division in the district as a case study. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to collect and analyze data.

3.2 Study population

The study was carried out in the selected of Kakamenga District in Western Province found in Kenya. The study involved both parents of the autistic learners and teachers.

3.3 Sample framework

3.3.1 Sample size

A total of thirty learners were used in this study.

3.3.2 Sample technique

Using a convenient sampling techniques, a total of thirty respondents were picked at random to participate in this study.

3.4 Methods for data collection

3.4.1 Instruments

- **Questionnaires**

These were used to collect information from learners as they are the major respondents for this study. Interviews were held the parents to get their views on the study.

3.4.2 Source of data

This study used both primary and secondary data:

Primary data was collected using questionnaires an interviews which were carried out with both parents and teachers.

Secondary data was through document analysis in the form of Reports, training manual, news papers, and journals for the period under study were read and the required data collected from them.

3.4.3 Data collection procedure

In carrying out research the researcher first got a release letter form the course administrators which the researcher took to the schools under study. The researcher then was given permission by the authority to access information from the school.

3.5 Data processing and analysis

Qualitative data involved three sets of activities which included editing, coding and frequency tabulations. Editing was done by looking through each of the field responses from interview guides ascertaining that every applicable question has an answer and all errors eliminated for the competences accuracy and uniformity.

Data was then presented in frequency tabulations rendering it ready for interpretation. Quotations and field notes made were also included.

3.6 Limitations of the study

The major limitation of the study was time constraint. There was no enough time to carry out this study because the time allocated was not marching the demands of what was supposed be got on the ground.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATIONS, ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges faced by autistic learners in selected schools of Kakamenga District in Western Province.

The result of data collected were presented and analyzed using descriptive method.

The following objectives guided the researcher

1. To identify characteristics of autistic learners
2. To assess the challenges faced by autistic learners
3. To examine the effects of these challenges on autistic learners
4. To establish possible solutions to overcome these challenges.

4.1 Characteristics of autistics learners

The researchers discovered that isolation is one of the most prominent characteristics of autism.

Language deficit is also common among the autistic learners, the use echolalic speech

The findings showed that out of 100 percent, 50 percent of the learners are from autistic families

4.2 Challenges faced by autistic learners

The researcher wanted to establish the challenges faced by autistic learners. The researcher discovered that 40 percent of the learners have brain disorder.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Normal learners	20	60
Autistic learners	10	40
Total	30	100

4.3 The effects of autistic learners

The researcher found out that most of these autistic learners are found of fighting with the rest because of the mental disorders.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to establish the challenges faced by autistic learners in selected schools of Kakamenga District of Western Province. The study guided the researcher with the following objectives.

1. To identify characteristics of autistic learners
2. To assess the challenges faced by autistic learners
3. To examine the effects of these challenges on autistic learners
4. To establish possible solutions to overcome these challenges.

5.1 Discussion

According to UNESCO (1975), indicates that quality and availability of teaching materials for a autistic learners is inadequate. Lack of proper policies and legal framework for special needs education is not being paid much attention. Most of the regular teachers have negative attitude toward autistic learners.

5.2 Conclusion

The challenges, the characteristics of autistic learners, the major challenges on the challenges faced by autistic learners in selected schools of Kakamenga District of Western Province as per the findings got form the field.

The researcher discovered that regular training of teachers and organizing of workshops should be emphasized so that teachers will be in position to deal with autistic learners.

5.3 Recommendations

1. The government should employ competent administrators and well educated teachers to handle such cases of autistic learners.
2. The government should provide adequate learning materials for the autistic learners to use.
3. The government should set up policies whereby autistic learners are not neglected but also be considered as activity learners.
4. The government should be find a curriculum that is suitable to the autistic learners

Research should always be carried out to establish more challenges faced by autistic learners.

REFERENCES

Bauman, M.L and Kemper T.L (1994). The neurobiology of Autism. The John Hopkins University press. Baltimore.

Dahlgren, S. O and Gillberg, (1989). Symptoms in the first two years of life; a preliminary population study of infantile autism. European Archives of psychiatric and Neurological science, 283, 169-174.

Dawson, G and Gallpert, L (1986). A developmental model for facilitating the social behaviors of autistic children. Plenum press. New York.

Deborah Deutsch (1992), Introduction to special education. Allyn and Bacdn, Mexico

Karen L, Feinberg (1998), Educating Exeptional children. Dauskin/ Mac-Graw Hill, Guiford U.S.A.

Koegel R. L, and Kern-Koegel, L. (1994). Autism, Paul H. Brooks. Baltimore.

Laura E. Berk (2001), Child development, Prentice-Hall of India, New Delhi.

Leary M.R and Hill D.A (1996), Autism and movement disturbance, Dunskin, Guilford U.S.A

Michael Lan (2002), A puzzling disorder. Prenum press. New York U.S.A

William L. Heward (1996). Exeptional children Prentice Hall, Inc Upper saddle river,
New Jersey, U.S.A

APPENDENCES

QUESTIONNAIRES JULY-AUGUST 2009

Please you have been selected to participate in this research, fill free and fill in these questionnaires and return them, it is for academic purposes and confidentiality will be kept.

(Tick appropriate)

1. Does the autistic learner attempt to pick up an object?

Yes

No

2. Does the autistic learner manipulate the object?

Yes

No

3. Does the autistic learner move and use his/ her legs and hands effectively?

Yes

No

4. Does the autistic learner hold and manipulate small objects using his/ her figures?

Yes

No

5. Can the autistic learner join other peers when they are playing?

Yes

No

6. What does the autistic learner do when he is not playing while others are playing?

Stares for long

He does not take note

Plays with them

7. What does the autistic learner engage in most of the time?

Playing with others

Playing alone

8. How does the autistic learner respond to external distractions during play?

Pays attention to them

Ignores them

9. What does the autistic learner prefer playing with?

One particular object

Many different objects

10. How does the autistic learner express annoyance?

Does not show

Thronging objects

11. How do you communicate to the autistic learners?

By talking

By signing

12. Do the autistic learners have fluent speech?

Yes

No

13. How do other learners interact with the autistic learners?

They mix freely

They segregate them

14. How do teachers frequent attending to autistic learners?