Self-determination is an essential psychological characteristic which plays a pivotal role on quality of life. Self-determination skills’ development may enable students with vision disability to succeed in school, work and community.

Purpose: The present study investigates the perceptions of special and general education teachers about the role of social acceptance and self-acceptance on self-determination of students with vision disability.

Methodology: 26 general and 17 special education teachers participated. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Their analysis was conducted through ATLAS.ti 8 software and followed the coding system by distinguishing groups of data and tracing thematic patterns.

Results: The analysis of the data revealed that social acceptance plays a crucial role in triggering self-determination skills. Also, social acceptance constitutes a major prerequisite for self-determination development. In addition, self-acceptance seems to be an influence factor on self-determination development. Further, self-acceptance may compose a significant skill of self-determination.

Discussion: Results confirmed the significant role of social acceptance and self-acceptance on self-determination of students with vision disability. Results are in line with relevant literature.

Keywords: self-determination, social acceptance, self-acceptance, vision disability, teachers’ perceptions.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Self-Determination and Individuals with Vision Disability

The notion of Self-Determination (from now on S-D) is defined as “a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior” [1, p. 10]. The most contemporary definition suggests that S-D is a “dispositional characteristic manifested as acting as the causal agent in one’s life. Self-determined people (i.e., causal agents) act in service to freely chosen goals.” [2, p. 258]. S-D is a psychological construct and reveals the same aspects for all people regardless features like: disability, ethnicity, race, gender, place of living, and so on [3]. Quality of life is strongly correlated with S-D [4] and it seems that S-D have an exceptional part in preparation of children to gain an active role on their own wellbeing [5].

Individuals with Vision Disability (from now on VD) obtain limited visual stimuli [6] because of their “decrease in vision that, even when corrected, adversely affects a child’s educational performance” [7, Sec. 300.8]. Moreover, their unsurprising difficulties in observation of available choices can influence their S-D degree and in turn if S-D development does not occurred students with VD (from now on SwVD) are “at risk of remaining dependent on others for life” [8, p. 472]. In addition, evidence based research points out that individuals with VD have less chances compared to sighted peers for S-D skills’ cultivation [9] and equally low rates on domains such as capacity and opportunities for S-D are documented [10]. Also, the participation of SwVD in research studies which suggest evidence based practices for promoting S-D is limited and without clear influence recording of their results on SwVD population [11]. Although, development may enable SwVD to succeed in school, work and community and to enhance self-esteem levels [8]. Further, the significance of S-D skills’ development is emphasized by teachers of SwVD [12], [13].
1.2 Social Acceptance, Self-acceptance and Self-Determination

Bernard defines self-acceptance as an affirmation of self, despite its weaknesses [14, p. xiv]. According to Hoffman and Field, self-acceptance, as a requirement of self-value, comprises the foundation of S-D development process [15]. As they explain, self-acceptance “includes the ability to admire the strengths that evolve from dealing with one’s unique qualities, including aspects of the self that are often viewed as weaknesses” [16, p. 166]. In addition, self-acceptance seems to have an active engagement in developing S-D [17].

Social acceptance contains dimensions like peer’s acceptance, teacher's and family’s acceptance of one student [18]. Social acceptance is described as the child’s actual liking by other [19]. In addition, social acceptance is related with popularity or rejection of once by a peer group [20]. Social acceptance as part of social inclusion plays an important role as mediator factor between S-D development interventions and their effectiveness degree [21]. In that way, social acceptance may have an engagement in promoting S-D skills [22].

1.3 Importance and Purpose of Present Study

Evidence based research data on field of S-D of SwVD are limited and the quality of them on educational aspects of S-D development is varied [23]. Whilst the value of S-D skills seem to be crucial in students with disabilities, it seems that there is a research gap regarding the effect of social acceptance on S-D of SwVD [13].

Taking in consideration the emerged research gap, the present study investigates the perceptions of special and general education teachers about the role of (a) social acceptance on SD of SwVD and (b) self-acceptance on SD of SwVD.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sample

Twenty-six (26) general education teachers and seventeen (17) special education teachers participated in the present study. Nine (9) of them were males and thirty-four (34) were females. Their age range was from twenty-two to sixty (22-60) years old with one to thirty-six (1-36) years of teaching experience. All special education teachers who were involved in this study had worked at least one year with students with vision disability at inclusive or/and special educational settings, whereas only five general education teachers have similar working experience.

2.2 Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were constructed in order to work out the research objective of the present study [24]. The questions of the interview guides were based on relevant literature review on S-D and SwVD. Two interview guides were developed, for general and special education teachers respectively. Both interview guides contained questions relevant to perceptions of teachers about: (a) S-D definition, (b) S-D skills, (c) S-D skills’ development, (d) factors which can influence S-D development, and (e) benefits/outcomes of S-D development. The interview guide which referred to special education teachers incorporated more questions regarding their experiences on: (a) applied S-D skills of their SwVD, (b) barriers and/or facilitations they faced up to their efforts to develop S-D skills of their SwVD.

2.3 Research Procedures

The authors contacted the teachers through relative scientific associations and social networks. In total, 43 semi-structured interviews were conducted via a. face-to-face meetings (N=25), and b. long-distance meetings (N=18). A member of the research team travelled more than 4,000 kilometers all over Greece to meet the teachers of the sample and conduct face-to-face interviews (in total15 Greek cities). The rest interviews were done by Skype, Messenger or FaceTime (i. e. video interview) (see more details in Table 1). All interviewees were informed about the concept of the study and agreed to the audio-recording. In turn, the authors proceeded to the process of transcription and checked the accuracy level of these transcripts through two transcribers.
Table 1. Distribution of different type of interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N face-to-face interviews</th>
<th>N video interviews</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General education teachers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education teachers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis is classified as qualitative and it is based on the general inductive methodological framework of Miles and Huberman [25] and its reviewing from Saldana [26]. The present analysis followed a coding system by distinguishing groups of data and tracing thematic patterns in the interviews [26]. The analysis and classification of data was conducted through ATLAS.ti 8 software for Windows (from now on ATLAS) and the procedure was guided by a Five Level Qualitative Data Analysis analytic plan [27]. A separate, but identical, analytic path of two circles was followed (see Figure 1) for each research question and for each target group (general and special education teachers respectively).

Based on the general research objective and on a holistic approach of the interview transcripts, a conceptual framework was constructed for each research question. The content of the interviews (transcriptions) was inserted into the software ATLAS and were coded as “documents” thereafter. In turn, groups of documents were created through specific components of ATLAS in terms of: a. teachers’ gender (male-female), b. teachers’ profession (general-special education teacher), and c. type of interview (face-to-face and video interview).

![Figure 1. Analytic plan of qualitative data analysis.](image)

The extracts from the interviews (i.e. quotations) created the so-called “sub-categories” (first level of analysis or first circle coding process). This process is methodologically implemented via descriptive coding where “the basic topic of a passage” is summarized “in a word or short phrase” [28, p. 88]. The first circle coding process in ATLAS is feasible through the component “open coding” function, and after this point all relevant quotes can be included to a specific code via “drag and drop” function. In ATLAS the sub-categories are identified and recognized by the term “codes” and they are directly linked to the raw data of the study (in our case extracts from the interviews).

On the second circle of analysis (i.e. second level of analysis) the sub-categories are merged into categories depending of their semantics via pattern coding [28]. The creation of “categories” in ATLAS are identified and recognized by the term “codes” and they are directly linked to the raw data of the study (in our case extracts from the interviews).

The data were retrieved, combined and cross-tabulated through a dynamic component of ATLAS, the “code-document table”, which can track down coded quotations which are incorporated in: (a)
document(s) (i.e., codes) and/or (b) document group(s) (i.e., code group(s)) [29]. Figure 2 provides an example of cross-tabulation by selecting and combining code(s) or code group(s) and document(s) or document group(s). In turn, by clicking on any outcome of the cross-tabulation results, related quotations appear in a list on the bottom-right of the screen.

3 RESULTS

3.1 An Overall View

Based on the above analysis, it seems that social acceptance and self-acceptance play a significant role on S-D of SwVD. The analysis pointed out sixty-six quotations. In particular, forty-five (45) quotations stemmed from thirty-five (35) teachers regarding social acceptance and twenty-one (21) quotations were recorded by nineteen (19) teachers relevant to self-acceptance (see more details in Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Education Teachers</th>
<th>Special Education Teachers</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N_quotations</td>
<td>N_teachers</td>
<td>N_quotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-acceptance</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social acceptance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Social Acceptance and Self-Determination

With regard to the role of social acceptance on S-D of SwVD, the categories and sub-categories which were revealed, have the same semantic content and are presented here together for both general and special education teachers. Based on the recorded data, three (3) thematic categories and two (2) sub-categories were developed (see Table 3). It is worth mentioning that the category “prerequisite of S-D” showed up only in the general education teachers’ perceptions.
Table 3. Distribution of quotations per categories and sub-categories of social acceptance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>General Education Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nquotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of social acceptance on S-D development</td>
<td>The lack of social acceptance as a barrier on S-D development</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social acceptance as facilitator of S-D development</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social acceptance as outcome of S-D development</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social acceptance as prerequisite for S-D development</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.1 Social Acceptance as Influence Factor of S-D Development

The analysis of the data revealed that social acceptance plays a key role in developing S-D skills. In specific, fifteen (15) teachers pointed out that *the lack of social acceptance may have a negative impact on the development of S-D skills*, whereas twenty-three (23) teachers reported with certainty that social acceptance incorporates the capacity to create, ensure and excel S-D skills (see Table 3).

A more extended qualitative analysis was conducted in order to trace semantic patterns (or otherwise “units”) within the observed categories and sub-categories. In specific, the prevailing “semantic units” which were observed through the components of ATLAS within the category “Influence of social acceptance on S-D development” were the following: (a) “classmates”, (b) “educator(s)”, (c) “family”, (d) “society” and (e) “vision disability” (see Table 4). The above notions (semantic units) were present in a vast amount of quotations and they were observed in 37 quotations out of forty (see Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of semantic units in sub-categories in “Influence of social acceptance on S-D development”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Semantic units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Classmates Nquotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of social acceptance on S-D development</td>
<td>The lack of social acceptance as a barrier on S-D development (Nquotations =15)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social acceptance as facilitator of S-D development (Nquotations =18)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Lack of social acceptance as a barrier on S-D development

Eight (8) participants reported that families had serious issues to accept the fact that their children had severe vision disabilities. As a result, this fact may have had a negative impact in establishing and developing their children’s S-D skills. Some extracts are provided below: “the role of family is extremely important regarding children’s development of S-D skills. What can you expect from a child when his own parents cannot accept and treat effectively his limited eye condition?”, “Vision disability...
may affect significantly the level of the child self-determination, if the members of its family or its friends and classmates do not accept his sight deprivation”.

**Social acceptance as facilitator of S-D development**

Fifteen (15) teachers mentioned the pivotal role that the sighted classmates play in the blind students’ development of S-D skills. Some representative extracts are provided below: “Self-determination skills take place within a team of members who interact. For example, the interactions between the members of a team in a dramatic play – say sighted and blind students – create a sense of belonging, which is built upon mutual acceptance and fruitful communication”. Six teachers underlined the significant impact of family’s social acceptance of SwVD regarding their S-D skills and three (3) of them held the view that the more the family accepts their child’s blindness, the higher level of S-D the child with blindness develops. In the same line other participants referred to similar thematic on behalf of the educators and the society in general.

### 3.2.2 Social Acceptance as a Prerequisite of Self-Determination Development

The perspective of social acceptance as an essential prerequisite element of S-D development was doubted by three (3) teachers. Nevertheless, the vast majority highlighted the fertile capacity of a team, because as they said “a team is a mini-structure of the society within which social acceptance may take place preparing the ground for developing self-determination”.

### 3.2.3 Social Acceptance as an Outcome of Self-Determination Development

Two (2) teachers mentioned that social acceptance may be conceived as an outcome of S-D development. Teacher (P15) reported that “…despite the fact she is blind she has overcome many obstacles exhibiting well-cultivated S-D skills. This situation made her more acceptable from her peers.” Also, Teacher (P17) noted that “if you recognize the blind students’ abilities then the students will learn to maintain and promote them and in turn receive social acceptance”.

### 3.3 Self-acceptance and Self-Determination

In respect to self-acceptance effect on S-D of SwVD the relative categories and sub-categories had the same semantic content as above. Three (3) thematic categories and two (2) sub-categories were emerged (see Table 5). The sub-category “Lack of self-acceptance as a barrier on S-D development” was not mentioned by the special education teachers. Accordingly, the category “Self-acceptance as outcome of S-D development” was not traced by the general education teachers.

**Table 5. Distribution of quotations per categories and sub-categories of self-acceptance.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>General Education Teachers</th>
<th>Special Education Teachers</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N_quotations</td>
<td>N_teachers</td>
<td>N_quotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of self-acceptance on S-D development</td>
<td>Lack of self-acceptance as a barrier on S-D development</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-acceptance as facilitator of S-D development</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-acceptance as outcome of S-D development</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-acceptance as S-D skill</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.1 Self-acceptance as an Influence Factor of Self-Determination Development

+ Lack of self-acceptance as a barrier on S-D development

Three (3) general education teachers held the view that lack of self-acceptance might be a great barrier on S-D development. They also believed that the factor “vision disability” may constitute a significant influencing parameter on the development of S-D. In addition, two teachers stressed that self-acceptance may be depended on the chronological age of the vision loss (congenital VD vs adventitious VD).

+ Self-acceptance as facilitator of S-D development

According to nine (9) participants, self-acceptance could be an important facilitator of S-D development. More specifically, they referred to self-acceptance of VD occurrence from SwVD as a step forward to the development of S-D skills. Some characteristic extracts are provided below: “the development of S-D could take place by self-acceptance procedures in class via reading and dramatic playing; small histories like Elmer – the colorful elephant, could be an excellent example”, “…we need actions through which students are able to notice their differences and similarities with their classmates in order to accept their uniqueness. I think that arts and dramatic play approaches give such opportunities”, “…in order to develop S-D skills, students should develop skills of self-objective observations and then they may proceed to the stage of acceptance their real self.”.

3.3.2 Self-acceptance as an Outcome of Self-Determination Development

Self-acceptance is considered as an outcome of S-D development from two (2) participants. On question “How do you think that S-D development helps the quality of SwVD life?”, P23 answered “By accepting themselves; in this way, they may become more assertive and pleased with their characteristics, hence they can carry on with their lives.”.

3.3.3 Self-acceptance as a Self-Determination Skill

Seven (7) participants pointed out that self-acceptance may compose a significant skill of S-D. Especially, P13 indicated with great clarity: “in my opinion S-D in practical terms means I know myself and I have accepted myself” and P4 stated that “…also, a self-determined person is ready to accept his limitations ….”. Finally, P38 and P25 referred to self-acceptance as one S-D characteristic of their SwVD. In particular, P25 pointed out: “… she knew very well her eye condition and I strongly think that she had accepted her condition. Therefore, she wanted to participate in all our classroom actions and she had a great progression in all domains of school life”.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Results confirmed the significant role of social acceptance and self-acceptance on S-D of SwVD. The vast majority of participants occupied positive thinking towards the role of social acceptance in developing S-D skills. This result is in line with “Social Ecological Approach to Promote S-D” [21], which explains that social acceptance is a primary feature of social inclusion which, in turn, is a mediating variable of promoting S-D (i.e. variable between interventions and S-D cultivation). In addition, the participants considered the factors “classmates”, “family”, “educators” and “society” as significant factors which play a critical role (influence factors) in the development of S-D. “Social Networks” and “Disability support system factors” [12], [30] are examples of such networks.

Similar results were obtained regarding the role of self-acceptance on S-D development. The teachers who participated in this study strongly believed that self-acceptance – specifically accepting the condition “vision disability” – is an important factor influencing S-D development. This result, is linked with the Model of Self-Determination which proposes the acceptance of self, as S-D underpinning [15], [16]. This model describes S-D development process as a circle which have four (4) sequentially steps (a) “Know Yourself” and “Value Yourself”, (b) “plan”, (c) “act”, (d) “Experience Outcomes and Learn” [16, p. 165]. This circular process indicates the dynamic interconnection between self-acceptance and S-D development (e.g. cause and effect relationship). Nevertheless, more evidence-based approaches are needed in order to create a robust pool of data to arrive at more conclusive inferences regarding the role of social acceptance and self-acceptance on S-D of SwVD.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research has been co-financed - via a programme of State Scholarships Foundation (IKY)- by the European Union (European Social Fund - ESF) and Greek national funds through the action entitled "Strengthening Human Resources Research Potential via Doctorate Research", in the framework of the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development Program, Education and Lifelong Learning" of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2014 – 2020.

REFERENCES


