ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/IJISRT24SEP158

Tutors' Perspectives on their Ability to Create Conducive Social Learning Environment for Students with Visual Impairments at Teachers' Colleges in Morogoro Region

Yuster Joseph Mnzeru
P. O. Box 1878,
Morogoro, Tanzania - East Africa

Abstract:- This study focused on determining tutors' perspectives on their ability to create conducive social learning environments for students with visual impairments at teachers' colleges in Morogoro Region. A descriptive survey research design and mixed research approach were adopted. The target population included tutors and heads of departments from both colleges. A sample size of 121 respondents was used. Data collection involved questionnaires for tutors, semi-structured interviews for heads of departments, and document reviews for contextual insight. Validity and reliability were ensured through peer reviews and pilot study. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The findings indicate a widespread perception of inadequacy among tutors in promoting interaction, observational learning, imitation, and providing clear demonstrations tailored to visually impaired students. These challenges highlight an urgent need for targeted training, specialized instructional strategies, and resource allocation to better support these students and enhance their educational experiences.

Keywords:- *Tutors, Social Learning Environment, Students with Visual Impairments and Teachers' Colleges.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education which seeks to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities, is increasingly recognized as a global priority. However, the implementation of inclusive practices, particularly for students with visual impairments, presents significant challenges. Research conducted in various contexts, including Kenya (Akinyemi, 2017), Australia (Morris & Sharma, 2011), and Ethiopia (Tizazu&Negassa, 2023), highlights the pervasive issues that students with visual impairments face, such as the lack of Braille materials and other assistive devices. These resources are essential for enabling students to access educational content independently and participate equally with their sighted peers. The absence of such materials and assistive devices not only restricts their learning opportunities but also creates barriers to their full engagement in the curriculum and interactions with their tutors.

Further complicating the situation is the lack of adequate training and support for tutors, which is crucial for fostering an inclusive learning environment. Studies from various countries, including Kenya (Kizito et al., 2019) and Tanzania (Sharma & Dash, 2018), underscore the challenges that tutors face due to limited training in inclusive teaching strategies and the absence of mentorship programs. Without the necessary professional development and support systems, tutors may feel ill-prepared to address the unique needs of students with visual impairments, leading to less effective teaching practices and a less inclusive classroom environment.

The attitudes of tutors towards students with visual impairments also play a critical role in shaping the inclusivity of educational settings. Negative attitudes, as reported in studies from the United Kingdom (Pelsmaeker& Smith, 2019) and Tanzania (Mbwambo& Nes, 2022), can contribute to a discriminatory environment, further marginalizing these students and hindering their educational experiences. Additionally, the rigidity of curricula and the lack of accessible instructional materials, as highlighted by Ralejoe (2021) in Lesotho and Mwakyeja (2013) in Tanzania, exacerbate the difficulties faced by visually impaired students, emphasizing the need for curriculum reform and the development of accessible infrastructure.

In Tanzania, the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream education settings, driven by the Persons with Disability Act of 2009, marked a significant shift towards inclusivity. However, the inclusion of students with visual impairments has been met with various challenges, including limited specialized support, budgetary constraints, and a lack of knowledge among educators regarding inclusive practices (Wilson, 2016; Mbwambo, 2022).

Given these challenges, teachers' colleges play a vital role in equipping future educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to create inclusive learning environments. These institutions have the potential to shape the perspectives and practices of aspiring tutors, fostering

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/IJISRT24SEP158

aninclusive mindset and providing comprehensive training on how to effectively support students with visual impairments.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of inclusive education, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding tutors' perspectives on their ability to create conducive social learning environments for students with visual impairments, particularly within the context of teachers' colleges in the Morogoro Region. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for developing strategies and support systems that enhance the inclusion and educational outcomes of visually impaired students in Tanzania. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by exploring tutors' perspectives on their ability to create inclusive environments for students with visual impairments, ultimately contributing to the broader effort to improve the implementation of inclusive education in the region.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory developed by Albert Bandura in the 1977 is a psychological theory that emphasizes the interaction between individuals, their behaviors, and the social environment in which they operate. Bandura (1977) proposed that people learn through observational learning, where they observe and imitate the behaviours of others, and through cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and motivation. The theory posits that individuals' beliefs about their own capabilities, known as self-efficacy, play a crucial role in shaping their behaviour and determining their level of success in various domains (Bandura, 1977).

Social cognitive theory has been widely applied in the field of education to enhance learning outcomes and understand the role of social interactions, self-efficacy, and self-regulated learning. Bandura (1977) introduced the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a task. Self-efficacy has been shown to influence academic achievement and motivation in educational settings (Pajares, 2005). Educators can utilize self-efficacy principles to cultivate positive beliefs in students' abilities and provide appropriate support and feedback to enhance their confidence and learning outcomes.

Furthermore, social cognitive theory has contributed to the development of self-regulated learning strategies in education. Zimmerman (1989) extended social cognitive theory to the concept of self-regulated learning, whereby students actively monitor and control their learning process. Self-regulated learners set goals, plan strategies, monitor progress, and adjust their learning strategies accordingly. This approach has been demonstrated to improve students' academic performance and motivation. Educators can promote self-regulated learning by teaching students strategies for goal-setting, self-reflection, and self-assessment. By incorporating social cognitive theory principles, educators can design effective instructional strategies, foster positive beliefs in students, and promote active and meaningful learning experiences.

Social cognitive theory offers several strengths and weaknesses in understanding human behavior. One strength is its emphasis on the reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors, providing a comprehensive framework for analyzing complex behaviors. social cognitive theory's incorporation of observational learning and modeling processes enhances its applicability in explaining how individuals acquire new behaviors through observation and imitation of others. Moreover, social cognitive theory's focus on self-efficacy, or one's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations, its relevance in predicting and understanding motivation and performance outcomes. However, a weakness of social cognitive theory lies in its limited consideration of emotional and motivational factors that can significantly influence behavior, potentially overlooking the role of affective processes in shaping human actions. Additionally, some critics argue that social cognitive theory's emphasis on individual agency and self-regulation may overlook the broader societal and structural influences that can also impact behavior.

According to social cognitive theory, learning can be hindered between students and tutors in terms of imitation and observation due to several factors. Firstly, if tutors fail to provide clear and explicit demonstrations or models for learners to imitate, it can hinder the learning process. Additionally, if learners are not given sufficient opportunities to observe and engage in active observation of the tutor's behaviour, it can limit their ability to acquire new skills or knowledge. Furthermore, if tutors do not provide effective feedback or reinforcement for learners' imitative efforts, it can hinder the reinforcement process necessary for learning. In conclusion, the absence of clear models, limited opportunities for observation, and inadequate feedback can hinder the learning process in terms of imitation and observation within the student-tutor dynamic.

III. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research methodology employed to explore tutors' perspectives on the inclusion of students with visual impairments at Morogoro and Ilonga Teachers Colleges. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and mixed research approach. The target population consisted of tutors and heads of departments, with the sample size of 121 respondents (104 tutors and 17 heads of departments). Data collection tools included questionnaires for tutors, semi-structured interviews for heads of departments, and document reviews. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/IJISRT24SEP158

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Examination of the insights and experiences of tutors, the study seeks to understand how well they perceive their ability to support and enhance the learning experiences of visually impaired students.

➢ *Promoting Interactions Through Instructional Strategies*

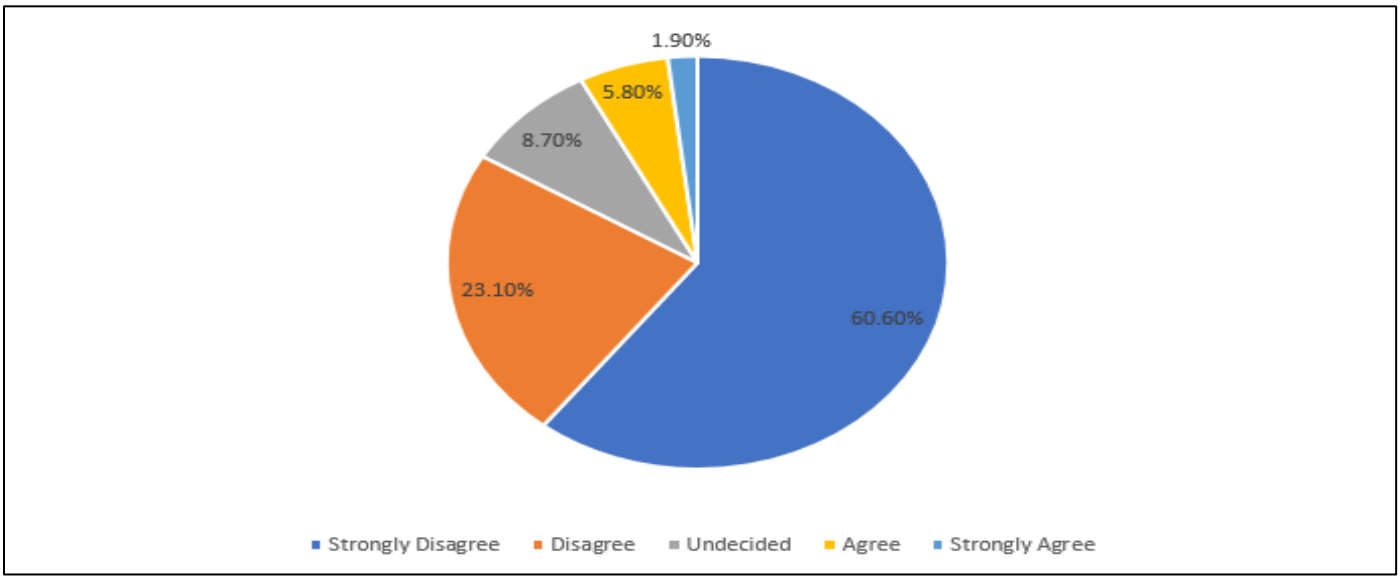

Fig 1 Promoting Interactions Through Instructional Strategies
Source: Field Finding (2024)

The data from Figure 1 reveals that a substantial majority of tutors (60.6%) strongly disagree, and 23.1% disagree with the statement that they effectively promote interactions through instructional strategies for students with visual impairments. This indicates a significant perception of inadequacy in creating interactive learning environments tailored to visually impaired students. Only a small fraction (7.7% agree, 1.9% strongly agree) believe their strategies are effective in this area.

It is evident that many tutors struggle with promoting effective interactions. One head of department commented, "*There's a noticeable gap in how our teaching methods support interaction for visually impaired students. We need to focus on providing better training and resources to address this issue, ensuring that all students can fully participate in learning activities*" (HoD1A, Personal Communication, May 2, 2024). Another head emphasized, "*Our current approach to fostering classroom engagement is inadequate, particularly for students with special needs. We must rethink our strategies and offer more targeted professional development for our tutors*" (HoD2B, Personal Communication, April 28, 2024). In the same spirit, a third voice said, "*The challenge lies not just in the lack of resources but in the inconsistency of support provided to our staff. Without proper guidance and continuous learning opportunities, tutors are left unprepared to create an inclusive and interactive learning environment*" (HoD3A, Personal Communication, May 5, 2024).

This finding suggests a critical need for improved training and development in instructional strategies that foster interaction. Ensuring that visually impaired students have opportunities to engage and collaborate effectively will require focused efforts and resource allocation. These findings concur with study by Kizito et al. (2019) who noted that, without adequate training, tutors may feel ill-equipped to address the unique challenges and requirements of visually impaired students, resulting in a less inclusive learning environment.

➢ *Encouraging Observational Learning for Students with Visual Impairments*

Table 1 Encouraging Observational Learning for Students with Visual Impairments

	Frequency	**Percent (%)**
Strongly Disagree	58	55.8%
Disagree	23	22.1%
Undecided	12	11.5%
Agree	7	6.7%
Strongly Agree	4	3.8%
TOTAL	**104**	**100%**

Source: Field Finding (2024)

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/IJISRT24SEP158

Table 1 indicates that 55.8% of tutors strongly disagree, and 22.1% disagree with their effectiveness in encouraging observational learning for students with visual impairments. The high proportion of disagreement highlights challenges in implementing methods that facilitate observational learning. Only a small percentage (6.7% agree, 3.8% strongly agree) feel confident in their ability to encourage this type of learning.

Encouraging observational learning seems to be a significant challenge. A department head noted, "*Our tutors sometimes struggle with finding ways to help visually impaired students learn through observation. We need to create and share better strategies to make sure these students can benefit from observational learning effectively*" (HoD3B, Personal Communication, May 9, 2024). Another department head expressed a similar concern, stating, "*While observational learning is crucial, adapting it to meet the needs of students with visual impairments has proven difficult. There is a pressing need for innovative approaches that make this type of learning accessible to all*" (HoD2A, Personal Communication, May 4, 2024). Reinforcing this, another department head commented, "*The lack of clear, actionable methods for incorporating observational learning into lessons for students with disabilities highlights a significant gap in our teaching practices. We must work collectively to bridge this gap*" (HoD4B, Personal Communication, May 12, 2024).

This finding points to the necessity of developing and training on suitable methods for fostering observational learning that accommodates visual impairments. Improved strategies could help tutors better support students in this learning approach. The findings are in agreement with t he study by Oyebanji and Idiong (2021) who suggested that, comprehensive efforts to improve the accessibility of instructional materials and teaching methods are essential to ensure the effective participation of visually impaired students in the educational process.

- *Fostering Imitation in Students with Visual Impairments*

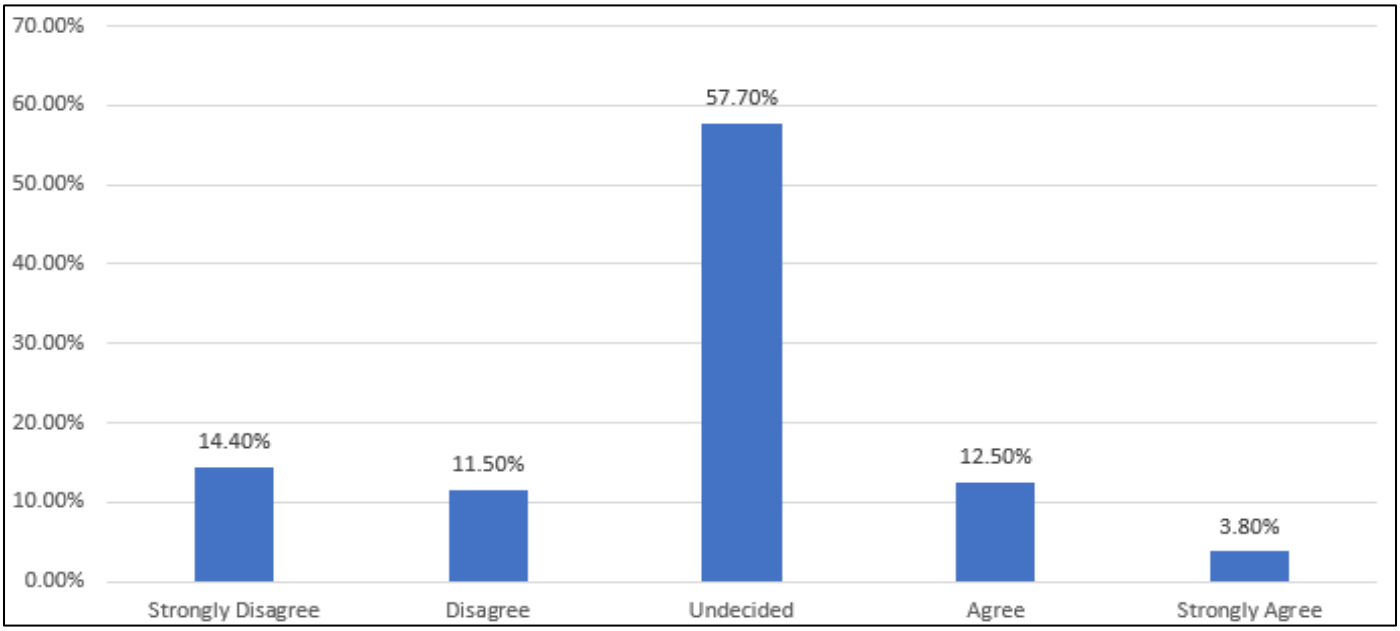

Fig 2 Fostering Imitation in Students with Visual Impairments
Source: Field Finding (2024)

According to Figure 2, a large portion of tutors (57.7%) are undecided about their ability to foster imitation in students with visual impairments, reflecting uncertainty about the effectiveness or appropriateness of imitation as a learning strategy. The dissatisfaction is also noted among 14.4% who strongly disagree and 11.5% who disagree. Only 12.5% agree, and 3.8% strongly agree that they are successful in fostering imitation.

The uncertainty about fostering imitation suggests a gap in effective strategies. One head of department remarked, "*Our tutors are unsure how to implement imitation techniques effectively for visually impaired students. More teaching aids, models, guidance, and examples are needed to improve the situation*" (HoD3A, Personal Communication, May 5, 2024). Another head echoed this concern, noting, "*There is a clear need for specialized resources and training to help tutors use imitation as a learning tool for students with visual impairments. Without these, it's challenging to create meaningful learning experiences*" (HoD2B, Personal Communication, April 30, 2024). As well, a third head of deparment added, "*The lack of confidence among tutors in employing imitation techniques highlights a significant gap in our instructional approaches. Addressing this requires a concerted effort to provide better tools and ongoing support*" (HoD4A, Personal Communication, May 6, 2024). These reflections underscore the necessity of developing and sharing effective strategies to ensure all students can benefit from imitation as a learning method.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/IJISRT24SEP158

This finding indicates a need for more effective and training focused on fostering imitation in ways that are accessible and beneficial for visually impaired students. Providing clear, practical methods, models and teaching and learning aids could help address this gap.

Social Cognitive Theory concurs with the findings that effective strategies and training must be tailored to facilitate imitation through accessible means, such as tactile or auditory cues. Social cognitive theory aligns with the idea that providing accessible and practical methods enables students to learn through observation, even when they lack visual input.

- *Facilitating Active and Meaningful Learning Experiences for Students with Visual Impairments*

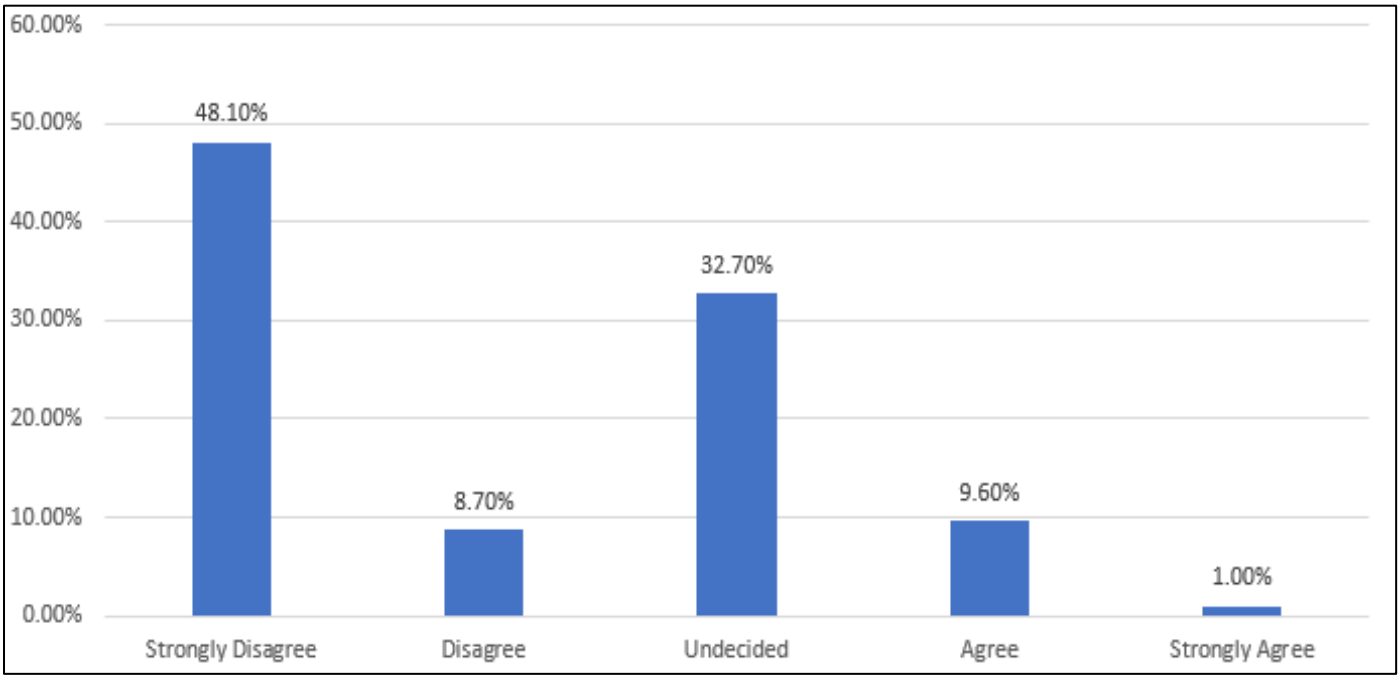

Fig 3 Facilitating Active and Meaningful Learning Experiences for Students with Visual Impairments
Source: Field Finding (2024)

Figure 3 shows that 48.1% of tutors strongly disagree, and 8.7% disagree with their ability to facilitate active and meaningful learning experiences for students with visual impairments. The relatively small percentage of tutors who agree (9.6%) or strongly agree (1.0%) suggests that many tutors are not confident in their ability to create active learning experiences.

Facilitating meaningful learning experiences seems to be a significant challenge. A department head noted, "*We need better strategies and resources to make learning more active and meaningful for students with visual impairments. This means developing new ways and tools to help them learn actively and effectively*" (HoD5B, Personal Communication, May 11, 2024). Another head echoed this concern, stating, "*Creating meaningful learning opportunities for all students, especially those with visual impairments, requires us to rethink our current methods and invest in more inclusive teaching tools*" (HoD6A, Personal Communication, May 8, 2024).

This result underscores the need for developing strategies and resources to help tutors engage visually impaired students more effectively, ensuring that learning experiences are both active and meaningful.

These findings are in parallel with the study by Tizazu and Negassa (2023) who suggested that, without adequate resources and specialized support, these students may face significant barriers to meaningful participation in inclusive classroom setting.

- *Providing Clear Demonstrations for Students with Visual Impairments*

Table 2 Providing Clear Demonstrations for Students with Visual Impairments

	Frequency	**Percent (%)**
Strongly Disagree	9	8.7%
Disagree	8	7.7%
Undecided	67	64.4%
Agree	15	14.4%
Strongly Agree	5	4.8%
TOTAL	**104**	**100%**

Source: Field Finding (2024)

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/IJISRT24SEP158

The data from Table 2 indicates that 64.4% of tutors are undecided about their ability to provide clear demonstrations while teaching for students with visual impairments. This high level of uncertainty suggests a gap in knowledge or practice. Only a small percentage of tutors (14.4% agree, 4.8% strongly agree) believe they provide clear demonstrations.

Providing clear demonstrations is an area where many tutors feel uncertain. A department head commented, "*There's a big need for special training on how to give demonstrations in a way that visually impaired students can easily understand. This training will help ensure that all students, regardless of their vision, can follow and benefit from the lessons*" (HoD4B, Personal Communication, May 12, 2024). Another department head highlighted this issue, stating, "*Our tutors often struggle with adapting demonstrations to be accessible for students with visual impairments. Without targeted support and resources, it's challenging to make these demonstrations effective for everyone*" (HoD3B, Personal Communication, May 9, 2024). In concurrence, a third head said, "*The gap in providing clear and inclusive demonstrations is significant. We need to equip our tutors with the necessary skills and tools to ensure that all students, particularly those with visual impairments, can fully engage with the material*" (HoD2A, Personal Communication, May 7, 2024).

This finding suggests that tutors might benefit from targeted training on how to deliver demonstrations effectively for visually impaired students. Addressing this need could help ensure that demonstrations are more accessible and beneficial.

These findings concur with social cognitive theory which suggests that tailored instruction can enhance the tutors' ability to present material in a way that these students can more easily understand and replicate. By focusing on such training, tutors can improve their effectiveness in facilitating learning for visually impaired individuals.

V. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant challenges tutors in the Morogoro Region face in fostering a conducive social learning environment for students with visual impairments. The findings reveal that many tutors feel inadequately equipped to promote interaction, encourage observational learning, foster imitation, and provide clear demonstrations tailored to the needs of visually impaired students. This sense of inadequacy emphasizes the urgent need for targeted training, resource allocation, and the development of specialized instructional strategies to better support these students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Acccording to the challenges identified in this study, it is recommended that targeted professional development programs can be implemented to equip tutors with the necessary skills and strategies for supporting students with visual impairments. These programs should focus on enhancing tutors' abilities to create interactive, inclusive learning environments, with an emphasis on practical methods for promoting interaction, observational learning, imitation, and clear demonstrations tailored to visually impaired students. Additionally, the provision of specialized resources and ongoing support will be crucial in helping tutors effectively apply these strategies in the classroom. Collaboration with experts in special education and the development of peer support networks could further enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives, ultimately leading to more meaningful and inclusive educational experiences for visually impaired students.

REFERENCES

[1]. Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice-Hall.
[2]. Mbwambo, A. B. (2022). Teachers'perspectives towards inclusive education in regular primary schools in Tanzania.*Direct Research Journal of Education and Vocational Studies*, 4(6), 174-178
[3]. Mbwambo, A.B. &Nes, K. (2022).Teachers' perspectives towards Inclusive Education in Regular Primary Schools in Tanzania.*Direct Research Journal of Education and Vocational Studies*, 4(6), 174-178.
[4]. Morris, C., & Sharma, U. (2011).Facilitating the inclusion of children with vision impairments: Perspectives of itinerant support teachers.*Australasian Journal of Special Education*, *35*(2), 191-203.
[5]. Mwakyeja, B. M. (2013). Teaching students with visual impairments in inclusive classrooms.*A case study of one Secondary School in Tanzania*.
[6]. Oyebanji, M. S., &Idiong, U. S. (2021). Challenges of Teaching Mathematics to Students with Visual Impairments. *Malikussaleh Journal of Mathematics Learning*, *4*(1), 1-6.
[7]. Ralejoe, M. (2021).A study to understand the inclusion of learners with and without visual impairments in a secondary school in Lesotho.*South African Journal of Education*, *41*(1), 1-12.
[8]. Tizazu, D., &Negassa, D. (2023).Assessing factors affecting inclusion of students with visual impairments in selected primary schools in DedoWoreda, Jimma Zone, Oromia Region (Doctoral dissertation, Haramaya University).
[9]. Wilson, L. (2016). Challenges Facing Children with Visual Impairments in Accessing Inclusive Primary Education: A Case of UhuruMchanganyiko Primary School, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (Doctoral dissertation, The Open University of Tanzania).
[10]. Zimmerman, B. J. (1989). A social cognitive view of self-regulated academic learning.*Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(3), 329-339.