

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF REGULAR TEACHERS TOWARDS SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN IBADAN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Inclusion of individuals with disabilities in regular school is enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal four SDG-4. In Nigeria, students with learning disabilities (SLDs) are found in regular classrooms with their peers without learning disabilities where the teacher may have little or no knowledge about their uniqueness. In addition, the teacher's attitude at times determines the rate at which SLDs will be socially accepted in the regular classroom. Hence, the study investigated the knowledge and attitude of regular teachers (RTs) towards social acceptance of SLDs in Ibadan, Nigeria. One hundred and forty-five regular teachers were randomly selected in the study. The instrument used for data collection was researchers' developed questionnaire tagged Questionnaire on Regular Teachers' Knowledge and Attitude towards Social Acceptance of Students with Learning Disabilities. It comprised twenty items. The questionnaire was subjected to validity which was done by three experts in related fields and they positively asserted that it is detailed enough to collect relevant data in the area of study. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test re-test method and a reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. Data collected was analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study revealed that RTs have high knowledge about the social acceptance of SLDs and the attitude towards them is receptive. It is therefore recommended that RTs should always have positive attitude towards social acceptance of SLDs in their classrooms.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Regular teacher, Social acceptance and students with learning disabilities

Introduction

Every human being is the product of his or her immediate environment. Functionality in one's society is determined by the level of acceptance one enjoys.

In National Policy of Education (2013), it is spelt out that one of the cardinal aims of education in Nigeria is to provide an egalitarian society for the citizens irrespective of sex, race or disabilities. To meet this, Federal Government of Nigeria is signatory to the implementation of Salamanca Framework of 1994 which shows that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and linguistic or other conditions.

Consequent upon this, learning classrooms in Nigeria are filled with different learners with different learning characteristics. Among these learners are the students with learning disabilities (SLDs). They are the students who tend to struggle with academic tasks such as reading, writing, listening and mathematics. This situation has been responsible for their poor academic achievement. Although SLDs are perceived to have average intelligence, they frequently struggle to comprehend information necessary for learning a new idea because they are affected by metabolic imbalance, genetic illness, environmental factors, neurological conditions and nutritional deficiencies. Additionally, individuals frequently become frustrated when trying to write due to the challenges with handwriting, spelling, and punctuation. According to Jing (2017), SLDs are expected to retain more of what they learn so as to be able to apply the knowledge practically to gain relevant knowledge. As a result, the classroom must adapt to their unique learning styles.

Bearing in mind the complex nature of academic tasks, SLDs face a truly daunting and arduous task in regular classrooms if they are not socially accepted by the teacher. Situations like social isolation, sadness, anxiety, embarrassment, and low self-esteem are fairly universal for SLDs. They rarely receive praise for their poor performance, therefore they are generally not internally satisfied, which makes them less inclined to study (Floress *et al*, 2015). To integrate and make them have a sense of belonging in regular classroom, social acceptance becomes imperative. Social acceptance is the degree to which the regular teachers are able to provide learning environment that will accommodate social needs of

all the students irrespective of their disabilities or weaknesses. Many researchers such as Lazarus and Akinbile (2016) and Fakolade, Adeniyi and Tella (2009) view students with special educational needs, particularly SLDs, in regular classrooms as beneficial because they believe these students can develop better social skills, improve their ability to acquire and apply new skills, improve their health, become more independent and be more successful in meeting their individualized education plan. Erika (2014) submitted that community and mutual respect between peers are imperative for the building and maintaining of strong peer-to-peer relationships within an inclusive classroom. With the assistance from teachers, administrators and support staff, SLDs are consistently supported through their social experiences in and outside of school. Extra-curricular activities and school initiatives that promote community help SLDs connect with their peers while also enhancing their own social experiences within the school. Consistent classroom and behavior management has the ability to set social expectations for all regular teachers which inevitably can benefit SLDs. Instructional strategies that are regularly implemented can also help maintain their social inclusivity. All these ingredients of social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in regular classroom can only be achieved if the regular teachers have apt knowledge about their learning uniqueness and exhibit positive attitude towards their social acceptance.

Regular teachers' knowledge of the social acceptance of SLD is limited to their comprehension of facts, information, descriptions and skills that they have learned through school or experience. It is how typical teachers conceptualize their students' social acceptance in the classroom. It is a well-known fact that without enough understanding and awareness about what inclusive education includes, particularly social acceptance of SLDs, the success expected of a well-organized and meticulously designed inclusive learning environment cannot be realised. According to Sharma *et al* (2022), evinced that primary school teachers' awareness of learning disabilities found that many lacked sufficient knowledge

to identify and support students facing such challenges. Typical causes of this include: educational authorities do not offer regular teachers with ongoing in-service training on teaching learners with special needs; teacher training programs dedicate little or no class time to comprehending the difficulties that students with specific disabilities face and how to support them in learning; and regular teachers typically do not pursue any additional research studies that concentrate on efficient ways to teach SLDs (Reinke *et al*, 2013). Therefore, it is expected of regular teachers to possess at least rudimentary understanding about social acceptance of SLDs and the best ways to organise and manage them in order to accomplish their intended goals.

Teachers' attitudes toward students with learning disabilities include their opinions, convictions, and feelings about the skills and learning abilities of these students, and they have a significant influence on classroom dynamics, student participation, and academic results. Mohsin *et al* (2014) investigated on attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in Punjab, Pakistan. The study consisted of 100 teachers, 50 of whom were randomly recruited from special needs schools and the other 50 from regular schools. The findings showed that Pakistani teachers' had positive attitude towards inclusive education. Conversely, Gürsel & Demirtaş (2016) found that many teachers expressed concerns and negative attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special needs, particularly regarding the social integration of these students in regular classrooms. Teachers often perceived inclusion as a challenge, especially when considering the academic and social outcomes for all students involved. Ajuwon (2012) found that a higher level of formal education was connected with a greater tolerance for the bad behaviours that are occasionally linked to students with disabilities. This essentially indicates that data regarding the attitudes of teachers are inconclusive in literature. Hence, this study investigated knowledge and attitude of regular teachers towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The inclusion of students with learning disabilities in regular classroom has gained increasing attention worldwide, including Ibadan, Nigeria. However, the success of social acceptance in regular classroom is largely dependent on the attitudes and knowledge of regular teachers, who play a pivotal role in fostering a socially inclusive classroom environment. In Ibadan, like many other parts of Nigeria, limited research exists on the extent to which regular teachers possess the necessary knowledge and positive attitudes to support the social acceptance of students with learning disabilities.

Despite efforts to ensure their social acceptance, they still face stigmatization, exclusion and discriminatory practices within classrooms. These challenges are often exacerbated by teachers' lack of understanding of the unique needs of these students and misconceptions about their abilities. Such barriers hinder the academic and social development of students with learning disabilities, leaving them vulnerable to marginalization.

Consequently, this study filled this gap in literature by investigated knowledge and attitude of regular teachers towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions raised for the study.

- (1) How knowledgeable are regular teachers towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan, Nigeria?
- (2) What attitudes do regular teachers have towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan, Nigeria?

Methods

The design of the study is a descriptive research approach. The population of this study comprised teachers in five public secondary schools in Ibadan. Selection was done using the simple random sampling method. The sample of the study comprised 145 regular teachers. Eighty-one (81) males and sixty-four (64)

females were selected. The instrument used for data collection was researchers' developed questionnaire tagged Questionnaire on Regular Teachers' Knowledge and Attitude towards Social Acceptance of Students with Learning Disabilities. It comprised twenty items. The questionnaire was subjected to validity which was done by three experts in related fields and they positively asserted that it is comprehensive and detailed enough to collect relevant data in the area of study. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test re-test method and a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained. Data collected was analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, mean and standard deviation).

Results

Table 1: Demographical characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities in Ibadan

S/N	Variables	Labels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age group	9-11years	15	10.35
		12-14years	40	27.59
		15-17years	50	34.48
		Over 18years	40	27.59
		Total	145	100.0
2	Sex	Male	81	55.86
		Female	64	44.14
		Total	145	100.0

Table one: shows the demographical features of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan. Age group; 15 (10.35%) were between 9-11 years of age, 40 (27.59%) were between 12-14 years, 50(34.48%) were between 15-17 years and 40 (27.59%) were over 18 years of age. Sex; 81 (55.86%) were male and were 64 (44.14%) were female.

Table 2: Regular teachers' knowledge towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan

s/n	Items	SD	D	U	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D
1	Students with learning disabilities can acquire higher academic achievement if they are socially accepted	13 9.0%	53 36.6%	18 12.4%	37 25.5%	24 16.6%	3.04	1.29
2	I need special in-service training in teaching students with learning disabilities	19 13.1%	47 32.4%	16 11.0%	46 34.7%	17 11.7%	2.97	1.28
3	Academic improvement is achievable, in my opinion, when students with learning disabilities are socially accepted in regular classes.	46 31.7%	21 14.5%	7 4.8%	44 30.3%	27 18.6%	2.90	1.57
4	Students with learning disabilities can become socially accepted because I have trust in my capacity to help them learn.	21 14.5%	53 36.6%	11 7.6%	42 29.0%	18 12.4%	2.88	1.32
5	Despite the fact that students have different cognitive, physical, and psychological characteristics, I think that social acceptance of students with learning disabilities will enable them to learn in most settings.	49 33.8%	21 14.5%	12 8.3%	40 27.6%	23 15.9%	2.77	1.54
6	I know that there is ability if students with learning	59 40.7%	11 7.6%	3 2.1%	50 34.5%	22 15.2%	2.76	1.62

	disabilities are properly trained in regular class							
7	students with learning disabilities often exhibit withdrawal symptom which makes social acceptance difficult	44 30.3%	30 20.7%	15 10.3%	31 21.4%	25 17.2%	2.74	1.51
8	With the help of social acceptance, students in general education serve as role models for social skills that students with learning disabilities learn.	49 33.8%	20 13.8%	13 9.0%	49 33.8%	14 9.7%	2.72	1.47
9	social acceptance of students with learning disabilities can be possible because I am adequately trained to meet their needs	46 31.7%	27 18.6%	13 9.0%	46 31.7%	13 9.0%	2.68	1.43
10	Students with learning disabilities often exhibit withdrawal symptom which makes SA difficult	25 17.2%	58 40.0%	14 9.7%	34 23.4%	14 9.7%	2.68	1.27
Weighted mean=2.81 Key: SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA=Strongly Agree.								

Table 2 shows the regular teachers' knowledge towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan. It shows that "Students with learning disabilities can acquire higher academic achievement if they are socially accepted" ($\bar{x}=3.04$) was ranked highest by the mean score rating as the main measure of teachers' knowledge and was followed in succession by "I need special in-service training in teaching students with learning disabilities" ($\bar{x}=$

2.97), “Academic improvement is achievable, in my opinion, when Students with learning disabilities are socially accepted in regular classes.” ($\bar{x}=2.90$), “Students with learning disabilities can become socially accepted because I have trust in my capacity to help them learn.” ($\bar{x}=2.88$), “Despite the fact that students have different cognitive, physical, and psychological characteristics, I think that social acceptance of students with learning disabilities will enable them to learn in most settings.” ($\bar{x}=2.77$), “I know that there is ability if students with learning disabilities are properly trained in regular class” ($\bar{x}=2.76$), “Students with learning disabilities often exhibit withdrawal symptom which makes SA difficult” ($\bar{x}=2.74$), “With the help of social acceptance students in general education serve as role models for social skills that students with learning disabilities learn.” ($\bar{x}=2.72$), “social acceptance of students with learning disabilities can be possible because I am adequately trained to meet their needs” ($\bar{x}=2.68$) and lastly “students with learning disabilities often exhibit withdrawal symptom which makes social acceptance difficult” ($\bar{x}=2.68$) respectively.

Table 3: Test of norm showing the level of regular teachers’ knowledge towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan

Interval	Mean index	Level of Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
1-25		Low	58	40.0
26-50	28.14	High	87	60.0

Table 3 shows the percentage level of knowledge of regular teachers towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan. 40.0% (n=58) teachers were not knowledgeable on SA, and 60.0% (n=87) teachers were knowledgeable. It could therefore be deduced that regular teachers in Ibadan were knowledgeable on the matter of social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in the study.

Table 4: Regular teachers' attitude towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan

s/n	Items	SD	D	U	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D
1	To ensure that students with learning disabilities are socially accepted in my class, I am prepared to work with the modified curriculum.	22 15.2%	31 21.4%	12 8.3%	62 42.8%	18 12.4%	3.16	1.32
2	If I take into account the social skills of students with learning disabilities in my class, the burden will be too much for me.	19 13.1%	33 22.8%	25 17.2%	61 42.1%	7 4.8%	3.03	1.17
3	I have problems teaching a student with learning disabilities	21 14.5%	42 29.0%	24 16.6%	45 31.0%	13 9.0%	2.91	1.24
4	It is difficult for students to make strides in social skills in the regular classroom	26 17.9%	39 26.9%	20 13.8%	52 35.9%	8 5.5%	2.84	1.25
5	Students with learning disabilities who require special social support disrupt the flow of normal lesson	20 13.8%	50 34.5%	19 13.1%	46 31.7%	10 6.9%	2.83	1.21
6	Students with learning disabilities should be placed in special class	30 20.7%	47 32.4%	7 4.8%	51 35.2%	10 6.9%	2.75	1.32

7	Knowing that I will have a student in my classroom that has learning disabilities makes me nervous.	24 16.6%	54 37.2%	17 11.7%	38 26.2%	12 8.3%	2.72	1.25
8	When I'm teaching students with learning disabilities in my class, I get easily annoyed.	21 14.5%	62 42.8%	16 11.0%	37 25.5%	9 6.2%	2.66	1.19
9	Teaching social skills to students with learning disabilities in my class often retard my knowledge	23 15.9%	61 42.1%	19 13.1%	30 20.7%	12 8.3%	2.63	1.21
10	Students with learning disabilities are known with poor performance in social tasks	23 15.9%	66 45.5%	17 11.7%	23 15.9%	16 11.0%	2.61	1.24
Weighted mean=2.81 Key: SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA=Strongly Agree								

Table 4 shows the measures of teachers' attitude towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan. "To ensure that students with learning disabilities are socially accepted in my class, I am prepared to work with the modified curriculum." ($\bar{x} = 3.16$) was ranked highest by the mean score rating as the major measure of teachers' attitude and was followed in succession by "If I take into account the social skills of students with learning disabilities in my class, the burden will be too much for me." ($\bar{x} = 3.03$), "I have problems teaching a student with learning disabilities" ($\bar{x} = 2.91$), "It is difficult for students to make strides in social skills in the regular classroom" ($\bar{x} = 2.84$), "students with learning disabilities who require special social support disrupt the flow of normal lesson" ($\bar{x} = 2.83$), "students with learning disabilities should be placed in special

class” ($\bar{x} = 2.75$), “Knowing that I will have a student in my classroom who has learning disabilities makes me nervous.” ($\bar{x} = 2.72$), “When I’m teaching students with learning disabilities in my class, I get easily annoyed.” ($\bar{x} = 2.66$), “Teaching social skills to student in my class often retard my knowledge” ($\bar{x} = 2.63$) and lastly “Students with learning disabilities are known with poor performance in social tasks” ($\bar{x} = 2.61$) respectively.

Table 5: Test of norm showing the level of regular teachers’ attitude towards SA of Students with learning disabilities in Ibadan

Interval	Mean index	Level of attitude	Frequency	Percentage
1-25		Poor	52	35.9
26-50	28.15	Good	93	64.1

Table 5 shows the percentage level of attitude of regular teachers’ towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Oyo. 35.9% (n=52) teachers had bad attitude to social acceptance of students with learning disabilities, and 64.1% (n=93) teachers had positive attitude to social acceptance. It could therefore be deduced that teachers in Ibadan had positive attitude towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in the study.

Discussion of Findings

The main objective of the study was to investigate knowledge and attitude of regular teachers towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan. In this study, the first finding revealed that regular teachers in Ibadan are knowledgeable about the social acceptance of students with learning disabilities. The finding is in line with the finding of Timothy, Obiekezie, Margaret and Odigwe (2014) that knowledge of teachers toward the inclusion of students with special needs in an inclusive setting in Nigeria is adequate. In their findings, 12.5 out of 16 percent of the teachers’ knowledge about inclusive education is high. According to Sharma and Sokal (2015), teachers who are well-informed about inclusive practices demonstrate higher knowledge in addressing

the needs of students with disabilities. Their study highlights that pre-service and in-service training programs significantly enhance teachers' knowledge and readiness for inclusion. Conversely, the findings of this study contradict the findings of Alnahdi (2020) who found that regular teachers generally acknowledge the presence of learning disabilities but their understanding of specific characteristics and intervention strategies remains limited. Similarly, Öztürk *et al.* (2022) found that a significant proportion of teachers lacked adequate knowledge about the identification and management of students with learning disabilities, emphasizing the need for targeted professional development programs.

The finding also showed that regular teachers have positive attitude towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in Ibadan. Attitude of the regular teachers in any academic work in most cases has a predictive influence on academic performance of the students. Consequently, the results of this study are consistent with those of Fakolade, Adeniyi, and Tella (2009) on teachers' attitudes regarding inclusion of students with special needs in regular classrooms: the case of teachers in some of the chosen Nigerian schools. In their findings, Nigerian teachers in Ibadan had more positive attitude towards the inclusion of special needs students. Nayak (2008) provided additional support for the findings of this present study, stating that teachers are prepared to work with pupils who have disabilities in an inclusive classroom and that they are also eager to overcome obstacles in the course of their work. In short, the premise for the outcome of this study is attributed to the fact that Ibadan is the pace setter of Special Education in Nigeria and the first university (University of Ibadan) to offer special education as a course of study is situated in Ibadan.

Conclusion

The study has found that regular teachers in Ibadan have high knowledge of the social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in regular classroom. In addition, it is revealed that regular teachers in Ibadan have

favourable attitude on the social acceptance of students with learning disabilities. Hence, active participation in classroom activities requires every student to contribute his or her quota to the sustainability of the class and teachers are expected to learn and use students' names, know something about each student, hold daily classroom meetings with students in their classrooms so as to help build sense of community and provide opportunities for students to participate noncompetitively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- Regular teachers should take into consideration their knowledge of learning disabilities in handling students with learning disabilities.
- Regular teachers should always have positive attitude towards social acceptance of students with learning disabilities in regular classroom.

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