

TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS STUDENTS WITH DYSGRAPHIA OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DUTSIN-MA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KATSINA STATE

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to investigate teachers' attitudes toward students with dysgraphia in selected schools in DutsinMa Local Government of Katsina State. A survey research design was adopted for this study. The researcher used 40 respondents as sample size while proportionate-sampling technique was used in selecting the sample size from the schools. The study used questionnaire as its primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire includes questions designed to assess the attitudes of teachers towards students with dysgraphia. Data was analyzed using simple percentages. Findings revealed that regular teachers' attitudes affect the academic performance of students with dysgraphia. Based on this conclusion, it was recommended that: Special education training should be created to train teachers to meet the needs of students with dysgraphia in their class. In addition, Head teachers of various schools should collaborate with special education teachers and other specialists in the area psychology, speech and language therapy so that jointly, they could meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Finally, Government, non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Parent Teachers Association (PTA) should provide schools with special need devices that can facilitate the teaching of pupils with dysgraphia and improve regular teachers' attitude towards them.

Keywords: Teachers, attitude, dysgraphia, teachers' attitudes

Introduction

Writing is a skill highly valued in our society, even in a time of computers and technology. In the past, handwriting was prized because it was a primary form of communication; people needed to get notes to others that were legible (Ediger, 2012). In a typical Nigerian classroom, students come from various backgrounds and face different learning challenges, including those with special needs. Among these, some children struggle with dysgraphia a condition that affects their ability to write clearly and effectively. Dysgraphia is a writing disorder that shows up in many ways, such as difficulty forming letters, problems with spacing and legibility, slow writing speed, issues with spelling and grammar, and challenges in composing ideas on paper. This disorder may occur alone or alongside other conditions like dyslexia and other learning difficulties.

Research by Hoorn, Maathuis, & Hadders-Algra (2013) shows that between 30% and 47% of children who have trouble with handwriting also experience difficulties with reading. For children with dysgraphia, everyday tasks like filling out forms, completing homework, taking exams, or writing personal messages can feel like monumental challenges. This is especially true when trying to express thoughts on paper. Handwriting difficulties are common in children with neurodevelopmental disorders, such as ADHD, cerebral palsy, and autism spectrum disorder, with

90–98% of these children experiencing issues related to handwriting. The underlying cause of dysgraphia is a difficulty in coordinating the various skills needed for writing—like auditory, visual, motor, and spatial skills. These challenges make writing an especially difficult task, affecting not just academic performance but also personal expression. (Valenta, 2016).

Being a student in any academic institution involves taking notes during lessons as part of the learning process. Writing plays a vital role in every child's education. It serves as a crucial form of communication that allows students to express, record, and share ideas throughout their academic journey. (Feizefu, 2021). Writing skills are closely tied to many school activities, and according to Chang and Yu (2014), handwriting tasks make up 30 to 60% of daily school activities. Writing is a sophisticated skill that represents one of the highest forms of human communication, contributing to the spread of culture and human ideas (Planton et al., 2013). It is considered complex because it involves a combination of perceptual-motor skills (planning and executing motor actions), cognitive and linguistic processes. As a result, writing is a multifaceted activity that refines language, literacy, and motor abilities (Bindman et al., 2014). Research suggests that effective handwriting relies on fine motor control, visual-motor integration, motor planning, proprioception, visual perception, sustained attention, and sensory awareness of the fingers. Any disruptions in these functions may hinder the development of writing skills (Martins et al., 2013; Okuda et al., 2011).

Although, handwriting is essential for conveying ideas, it is a complicated skill that integrates motor and linguistic elements, developed over time. Moreover, handwriting is necessary for many everyday activities that people might not immediately think of, such as taking notes, writing recipes, prescriptions, messages, checks, or filling out forms. Therefore, it is important to continue developing and teaching handwriting skills both in schools and at home. While written expression is emphasized in education, some children struggle with writing despite having intact cognitive abilities. These children are diagnosed with dysgraphia, a condition that affects their ability to express themselves through writing.

Because of the challenges they face, students with dysgraphia often leave assignments and classwork incomplete. They may be asked to redo their work, but this doesn't always lead to better results. These students typically have messy handwriting, struggle with memory, and find it difficult to manage the physical aspects of writing, which interferes with their learning. They may have an awkward grip on their pen or pencil, and they often struggle to keep lines and spaces consistent. Writing tasks can feel exhausting, requiring a lot of time and effort, and despite their best attempts, their performance on written assessments often suffers. As a result, they may face criticism from teachers, peers, and even their parents. For students with dysgraphia, producing neat, readable work and clearly expressing their thoughts in writing is a constant struggle (Jones, 2009; Hoorn, Maathuis, & Hadders-Algra, 2013). Writing becomes a source of stress and anxiety, which can lead to emotional struggles like low self-esteem, frustration, and even withdrawal from school. As these students find it hard to keep up with their peers, their academic journey may become overwhelming. According to Davis (2015) and Dcempt (2010), about 5 out of 4 students experience difficulties coping with dysgraphia in schools.

According to Obani (2006), learning disabilities like dysgraphia affect 15-30% of students. Similarly, Graham & Harris (2020), report that 10-30% of children have trouble mastering handwriting skills. This means that in a classroom of five students, as many as four could have difficulties with handwriting. These issues may affect a significant portion of the student population unless the condition is recognized and assessed early. The concern is heightened by the fact that so much of schoolwork depends on handwriting. Legible handwriting is critical to

academic success. Furthermore, the ability to write by hand is essential in daily life, whether it's filling out forms, writing checks, or even tasks like dressing and playing. A study of 20 kindergarten students revealed that nearly half of their day (46%) was spent on tasks that involved writing and fine motor coordination (Marri, Cermaky, & Cohnnie, 2019).

Attitudes toward learning play a crucial role in a student's success. This refers to how individuals respond to or feel about certain tasks or subjects. However, research by Chung, Patel, and Nizami (2020) found that 60-75% of teachers lack knowledge about instructional accommodations and do not use them to support students' learning. Without these accommodations, students' chances to engage in class and improve their skills are limited. Dysgraphia, which affects a student's ability to write clearly and accurately, can significantly impact both academic performance and self-esteem. Teachers play an essential role in supporting these students, but their attitude and approach can have a profound effect on the quality of education that students with dysgraphia receive (Olanipekun & Oyinloye, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers play a pivotal role in identifying and supporting students with dysgraphia. However, the attitudes towards these students can affect the quality of support provided. Negative attitudes, such as low expectations, lack of empathy, and a belief that students with dysgraphia are lazy or unmotivated, can contribute to a negative learning environment and hinder the success of these students.

In Nigeria and other developing societies, it can be observed that dysgraphia is one of the academic challenge faced by students in public secondary schools. This problem is greatly affecting teachers negatively as they need to spend more time on the “hard to read” write ups of students with dysgraphia. These students suffer greatly from this problem as most at times, their work is marked wrongly because the teacher could not read their poor handwriting.

Based on the foregoing, the study examines the attitudes of teachers toward students with dysgraphia in Public Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma, with the aim of identifying factors that contribute to negative attitudes and exploring strategies to improve teacher attitudes towards these students.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the attitude of teachers towards students with dysgraphia in selected Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. The specific objectives are:

1. To investigate the attitudes exhibited by teachers towards students with dysgraphia in selected Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area
2. To examine the extent to which attitudes of teachers affect students with dysgraphia in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area
3. To investigate the impact of teachers negative attitudes towards students with dysgraphia in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area
4. To proffer measures through which teachers attitude can positively improve the condition of students with dysgraphia in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the attitude exhibited by teachers towards students with dysgraphia in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area
2. To what extent does attitude of teachers affect students with dysgraphia in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area
3. What are the implications of teachers negative attitudes towards students with dysgraphia in selected Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area
4. What are the ways through which teachers' attitude can positively improve the condition of students with dysgraphia in selected Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area

Methodology

The researcher employed descriptive survey research design. The design was appropriate because the study evaluated the attitude of teachers towards student with dysgraphia. Descriptive research is the process of collecting data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions, prevailing practices, beliefs, attitudes, on-going process etc. The study population comprised all teachers employed in selected public senior secondary schools within Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. The precise number of teachers was determined using official records provided by the Local Education Authorities in the area.

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) the sample, size of 100 populations is 40. Therefore, the researcher used 40 respondents as sample size while proportionate-sampling technique was used in selecting the sample size from the schools. The study used questionnaire as its primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire includes questions designed to assess the attitudes of teachers towards students with dysgraphia. The questionnaire was closed ended.

Results

Research Question One:

What is the attitude exhibited by teachers towards students with dysgraphia in selected public schools in Dutsin-ma local government area?

Table 3: Attitudes Exhibited by Teachers towards Students with Dysgraphia in Selected Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma

S/N	Question	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
1.	Students with dysgraphia require extra attention in the classroom	14	35%	18	45%	6	15%	2	5%
2.	Teachers should receive specific training to effectively teach students with dysgraphia	21	52%	14	35%	2	5%	3	8%
3.	Students with dysgraphia can perform at the same level as their peers with appropriate support.	12	30%	14	35%	9	22%	5	13%

4.	I am confident in my ability to recognize the signs of dysgraphia in students	10	25%	14	35%	10	25%	6	15%
5.	Students with dysgraphia can benefit from alternative assessment methods.	21	52%	10	25%	5	13%	4	10%

Looking at the data, 35% of the respondents strongly agreed that students with dysgraphia require extra attention in the classroom, while 45% agreed, 15% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed. When it comes to teacher training, 52% strongly agreed that educators should receive specialized training to effectively teach students with dysgraphia, 35% agreed, 5% disagreed, and 8% strongly disagreed.

In terms of confidence in identifying dysgraphia, 25% of respondents strongly agreed they are confident in recognizing the signs, 35% agreed, 25% disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed. Finally, 52% strongly agreed that students with dysgraphia can benefit from alternative assessment methods, 25% agreed, 13% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed.

Research Question Two

To what extent does attitude of teachers affect students with dysgraphia in selected public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-ma local government area?

Table 4: Showing the Extent to which Attitudes of Teachers Affect Students with Dysgraphia in Selected Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government

S/N	Question	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
1.	I often encounter students whom you suspect might have dysgraphia	14	35%	11	27%	9	23%	6	15%
2.	My attitude toward students with dysgraphia is positive	24	60%	12	30%	2	5%	2	5%
3.	Negative attitudes towards students with dysgraphia can hinder their academic progress.	28	70%	10	25%	2	5%	0	0%
4.	Negative attitudes may lead to students with dysgraphia feeling demotivated or anxious in the classroom.	25	62%	11	28%	3	7%	1	3%
5.	Negative attitudes can affect the self-esteem and self-confidence of students with dysgraphia.	22	55%	9	22%	5	13%	4	10%

Looking at the data, 35% of respondents strongly agreed that they often come across students they suspect might have dysgraphia, 27% agreed, 23% disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed. In addition, 60% strongly agreed that they have a positive attitude towards students with dysgraphia, while 30% agreed, 5% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed.

When asked about the impact of negative attitudes, 70% strongly agreed that such attitudes can hinder the academic progress of students with dysgraphia, 25% agreed, and 5% disagreed, with no one strongly disagreeing. Similarly, 62% strongly agreed that negative attitudes may make students with dysgraphia feel demotivated or anxious in the classroom, 28% agreed, 7% disagreed,

and 3% strongly disagreed. Finally, 55% of respondents agreed that negative attitudes can harm the self-esteem and self-confidence of students with dysgraphia, 22% agreed, 13% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed.

Research Question Three

What are the implications of teacher’s negative attitude towards students with dysgraphia in selected Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area?

Table 5: showing the Implications of Teachers negative attitudes towards students with dysgraphia in selected Public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma

S/N	Question	SA	%	A	%	D	%	S	%
								D	
1.	Students with dysgraphia can achieve the same level of academic success as their peers without dysgraphia	9	22%	11	28%	13	32%	7	18%
2.	Teacher’s attitude towards this student is different from attitude towards other students without dysgraphia	21	52%	12	32%	3	8%	3	8%
3.	Teachers who exhibit negative attitudes towards students with dysgraphia may not effectively address their unique learning needs	25	62%	7	17%	5	13%	3	8%
4.	Students with dysgraphia are less likely to seek help or support from teachers if they perceive negative attitude	25	62%	9	23%	2	5%	4	10%

From the table above, 22% of respondents strongly agreed that students with dysgraphia can achieve the same academic success as their peers without dysgraphia, while 28% agreed, 32% disagreed, and 18% strongly disagreed. Additionally, 52% strongly agreed that teachers' attitudes toward students with dysgraphia are different from those toward students without dysgraphia, with 32% agree, 8% disagree, while 8% strongly disagree with the statement.

Moreover, 62% strongly agreed that teachers with negative attitudes towards students with dysgraphia may struggle to meet their unique learning needs, 17% agreed, 13% disagreed, and 8% strongly disagreed. Finally, 62% strongly agreed that students with dysgraphia are less likely to seek help from teachers if they perceived negative attitude, with 23% agree, 5% disagree, and 10% strongly disagree with the statement.

Research Question Four

What are the ways through which teachers’ attitude can positively improve the condition of students with dysgraphia in selected public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area?

Table 8: Showing Measures through which teachers’ attitude can positively improve the condition of students with dysgraphia in selected Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma

S/N	Question	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
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1.	Teachers should receive training on how to better support students with dysgraphia	20	50%	13	32%	4	10%	3	8%
2.	Students with dysgraphia should receive separate instruction	12	30%	16	40%	8	20%	4	10%
3.	Teachers should collaborate with special education professionals or specialists to support students with dysgraphia	27	67%	10	25%	3	8%	0	0%
4.	Increasing awareness about dysgraphia among teachers could lead to more positive attitudes and better support for students with dysgraphia	25	62%	12	30%	2	5%	1	3%

From the above table, 50% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that says Teachers should receive training on how to better support students with dysgraphia, 32% of the respondents agree with the statements, 10% disagree while 8% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. Similarly, 30% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that says Students with dysgraphia should receive separate instruction, 40% of the respondents agree with the statements, 20% disagree, while 10% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. Furthermore, 67% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that says Teachers should collaborate with special education professionals or specialists to support students with dysgraphia, 25% of the respondents agree with the statements, 8% disagree and 0 % of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. Lastly 62% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that says Increasing awareness about dysgraphia among teachers could lead to more positive attitudes and better support for students with dysgraphia, 30% of the respondents agree, 5% disagree while 3% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement.

Discussions

With proper examination of all the result obtained from the research carried out, it is obvious that some teachers show negative attitude towards learners with dysgraphia. This was in line with Ekwueme (2003) who posits that the key problem in educating students with dysgraphia and the growth of special education in Nigeria are the problem of negative attitude toward learners, no specially trained teacher and trained facilities.

Research question one was on the teachers' attitude exhibited towards students with dysgraphia in Public Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. Responses of the respondents were majority positive attitudes, which give students more confident upon themselves.

Research question two tend to prove that negative attitude that some teachers show to students with dysgraphia hinders their academic performance, making them to feel demotivated, anxious in classroom and reduce their level of self-esteem.

Research question three shows the implication of teacher's negative attitude towards students with dysgraphia in some selected Public Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area and how it affects their academic performance. Research question four provide suggestions through which teachers will show positive attitude toward the students with dysgraphia.

Conclusions

The fundamental purpose of this research was to examine teachers' attitude towards students with dysgraphia in Selected Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. Attempt was made by the researcher in providing other ways to inculcate and change the attitudes of other teachers who think students with dysgraphia are student who are not serious or cannot learn under any learning conditions. Hoping that the recommendations will also help, not only in some selected secondary schools in Dutsin-ma local government area but the country as a whole. It was also discovered that the academic qualification and teaching experiences of the regular teachers affect the academic achievement of students with dysgraphia.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be special education programs and training designed to help regular teachers gain the skills and knowledge they need to better support students with dysgraphia to effectively meet the unique needs of these students in the classroom.
2. Government through ministry of education and social affairs should provide mainstreamed schools/classes containing special material that will help facilitate the education of students with dysgraphia.
3. Head teachers of various schools should collaborate with their teachers and other specialist in the area of special education like speech and language therapist, so that jointly they may meet the learning needs of exceptional students.

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