

EVALUATION OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN DAMY PREPARATORY SCHOOL, DUTSIN-MA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KATSINA STATE

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Abstract

The study was carried out to evaluate the Teachers' Attitude towards Children with Learning Disabilities in Damy Preparatory School Dutsin-ma Local Government, Katsina State. Three objectives and three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The study employed Descriptive Survey Research Design. Twelve (12) pupils with learning disabilities were purposively selected and used as sample size from one hundred and one (101) populations among primary 1-5 pupils. Teacher nomination Inventory, Questionnaire for Teachers and Questionnaire for Children with learning disabilities was used as the instruments for data collection. The validation of the instruments was done by two experts who carefully went through the items and make necessary corrections. The reliability of these instruments (0.7, 0.9 and 0.9) was established through pilot study, where the instruments were pilot tested at Government Day Secondary school Darawa which is not part of the study area. Descriptive statistics of simple percentages, mean and standard deviation were used in analyzing the data collected. The study discovered among other findings that, Teachers show positive attitudes towards children with learning disabilities and uses varieties of teaching methods to teach children with learning disabilities in the school. Based on the finding it has been concluded that, these children are experiencing significant challenges in reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling and motor skills. These characteristics they exhibited are mostly unidentified by the teachers because they have no experience or knowledge about learning disabilities and this prevent the early identification and intervention. It is therefore the recommends among others that, Teachers should be provided with professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in supporting children with learning disabilities.

Key words: Teachers, Attitudes, Students, Learning Disabilities.

Introduction

Learning disabilities are heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by specific and persistent difficulties in the acquisition and use of efficient reading, writing or mathematical abilities. Lerner, (2013) opines that, learning disabilities are neurological disorders that affect an individual's ability to process information, leading to difficulties in learning and academic achievement. Children with learning disabilities require support and accommodation to succeed academically and socially. Learning disabilities have created significant concern in education, affecting a substantial number

of pupils worldwide. These disabilities can impact on various aspects of learning, including reading, writing, mathematics, and social skills. As a result, pupils with learning disabilities often require specialized support and accommodation to succeed academically and socially.

Eagly and Chaiké, (2013) defined attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor. It involves three components: emotional component (how the object, person, issue or event makes you feel), cognitive component (your thoughts and beliefs about the subject) and behavioral component (how the attitude influences your behavior)". Teachers' attitude has implications on student's own attitude and their learning outcomes. A teacher's attitude has the power to enhance or seriously harm the quality of life of the children with disabilities. The integration of children with learning disabilities within the mainstream classroom depends on the teachers as they are considered as mediators in the inclusive education process (Campbell, 2013). According to Avramidis and Norwich, (2012) Teachers play a vital role in shaping the learning experiences of students with learning disabilities. Their attitudes and beliefs can significantly influence the quality of education and support provided to these pupils. Positive teachers' attitudes can lead to: Increased empathy and understanding; appropriate accommodations and modifications; higher expectations and academic achievement; and improved social interactions and inclusion.

On the other hand, negative teachers' attitudes can result in: Low expectations and stigma; inadequate support and accommodations; Social isolation and exclusion; poor academic outcomes and decreased motivation. Damy Preparatory School in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, is a crucial context for this study, as teachers' attitudes can impact the implementation of inclusive education policies and practices. This study aims to investigate the teachers' attitudes towards children with learning disabilities in Damy Preparatory School, exploring factors that influence their attitudes and the implications for teaching practices.

Statement of Problem

Children with learning disabilities face significant challenges in accessing quality education in Nigeria. Despite the importance of education in promoting social mobility and economic development, students with learning disabilities often experience marginalization, stigma, and exclusion in schools (UNESCO, 2007) Research has consistently shows that teachers' attitudes towards children with learning disabilities play a crucial role in shaping their learning experiences. Unfortunately, Teachers in Nigeria often hold negative attitudes towards students with learning disabilities, leading to inadequate support and accommodations (Okeke, 2015). This can result in poor academic performance, social isolation, and decreased self-esteem among affected students (Ibrahim, 2017).

Damy Preparatory School in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area, Katsina State, is not immune to this challenge. Despite efforts to promote inclusive education, teachers in this school may hold negative attitudes towards children with learning disabilities, leading to a lack of understanding and support. This can result in: Inadequate accommodations and modifications, Limited access to learning resources and opportunities, Social isolation and stigma, Poor academic performance and decreased self-esteem. Since this is the problem, there is a strong need to investigate the attitudes of teachers towards children with learning disabilities in Damy Preparatory School, with a view to identifying the factors that influence these attitudes and developing strategies for improving

teacher support and inclusion. In line of the above, this study evaluates the Teachers' Attitudes towards Children with Learning Disability in Damy Preparatory School Dutsin Ma.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Find out the incidence of learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school Dutsin Ma local government area, Katsina state.
- ii. Examine the Teachers' Attitude towards Children with Learning Disability in Damy Preparatory School Dutsin Ma.
- iii. Identify the methods used in teaching children with learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school Dutsin Ma.

Research Questions

The following research questions are hereby formulated to guide the study.

- i. What is the incidence of learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school Dutsin Ma local government area, Katsina state?
- ii. What are the Teachers' attitudes towards Learning Disabled Children in Damy Preparatory School Dutsin-ma, Katsina state?
- iii. What are the methods used in teaching children with learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school Dutsin-ma?

Literature Review

Concept of Learning Disabilities

Learning difficulties in general, refers to a neurobiological problem caused by abnormalities in how the brain functions and constructed. Furthermore, "learning disability" is a broad term for various learning difficulties. A learning handicap makes it harder for a person to learn and apply specific abilities (Lerner, in Prasad and Burle, 2022). The definitions given by various authors suggest that learning disability refers to retardation, disorder, or delayed development in any one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing, or arithmetic. These problems are due to disorder or deficiency in any one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in use of spoken or written language. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing or motor handicaps, mental retardation, and emotional disturbance or to adverse environmental factors. The child can be considered as learning disabled if, (1) he has considerable difficulty in understanding or using spoken language, reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic, during the developmental period (before 16 years of age), (ii) he has adequate facilities, interest and motivation to learn (Ramaa, cited in Ali and Rafi 2016). According to government regulations, children with learning disabilities have "disorders in one or more basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations.

There are many different kinds of learning disabilities. Most often they fall into three broad categories: Reading disabilities (often referred to as dyslexia) written language disabilities (often

referred to as dysgraphia) Mathematics disabilities (often called dyscalculia). Learning disabilities, including dyslexia and ADHD, are often associated with poor academic achievement (Capano, Minden, Chen, Schachar & Ickowicz, cited in Dowker, 2020). They observed ADHD as a common childhood onset neuropsychiatric disorder characterized by impairing levels of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. He further developed such ideas even further, suggesting that specific learning disabilities, including ADHD, are associated with impairments in working memory. Children with specific language impairments appear to have problems with phonological memory, number recall, working memory and automatic retrieval of items stored in the long-term memory.

Categories of Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities are caused by impairments in one or more of the cognitive processes associated with learning. A learning disability affects an individual's ability to acquire, retain, comprehend, and organize verbal and/or non-verbal information. Harlaar, Spinath, Dale, and Plomin, (2015) stated that, Learning disabilities is a long-life conditions which is characterized by significant difficulty in at least one of the following areas:

- i. Reading (Dyslexia)
- ii. Writing (Dysgraphia)
- iii. Mathematics (Dyscalculia)

Causes of learning disabilities

Speculations about the causes of learning disabilities are numerous, and the causes of learning disabilities for an individual's student may be unknown. The more accepted causes for learning disabilities fall into the following categories: environmental/ecological, brain damage, organic or biological, and genetic. Research in medicine, psychology, linguistics, and education is ongoing to discover the causes of learning disabilities. Currently, explanations about causes are speculative. Experts suggest that there are various levels of severity, multiple problems, influences, and at-risk vulnerabilities that vary from student to student. The causes of learning disabilities may be embedded in the children as well as in the environment and may be complicated by organic, genetic, or biological anomalies (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2016; Hallahan & Mercer, 2012).

Characteristics of learning disabilities

Mercer, (2017) stated that, Persons with learning disabilities belong to a very diverse group of people. They do not exhibit characteristics of physical features, actions, symptoms, precise genetic patterns, or other markers. They do, however, share some characteristics: they do not learn in the same way or as efficiently as their classmates. However, they frequently do not learn in the same way as their peers who are also labeled learning disabled. Although persons labeled learning disabled have average to above average intelligence, the academic performance is unexpected lower than would be predicted. Learning disabilities span the lifetime of a person, but for very young children and for adults, it is less notable. Persons of school age have less choice of activities, and their disability may be more markedly evident. As adults, those same people may find careers or jobs that do not require them to perform tasks that are in the area in which their disability is manifested. Similarly, some children may avoid difficult tasks in preference to activities that are more fun and thus less frustrating. Each characteristic observed in a given student can range from

mild to severe. Often student appear unmotivated, passive, or inactive about involving themselves in the learning situation of the classroom, yet some appear to have a higher level of physical activity than others children in their classes. There are more males than females (3- to-1 ratio) identified as learning disabled. Student with learning disabilities are more of ten retained in a grade than their peers. One difficulty in distinguishing children with learning disabilities from low-achieving children is; Children with learning disability are emotionally disturbed that is, behavior problems or emotional problem are not the primary causes of their learning disabilities. These children may exhibit a learning problem in one area and not in another.

Methodology

Descriptive Survey Research Design was employed in this study with one hundred and one (101) from primary 1-5 pupils and five (5) Teachers teaching in Damy Preparatory School Dutsin-ma Local Government Area as the populations from where Twelve (12) children with learning disabilities were identified and used as sample size using Purposive Sampling Technique. Three instruments were used to collect data in this study, which includes: Teacher nomination Inventory, Questionnaire for Teachers to express the methods used in teaching children with learning disabilities and Questionnaire for Children with learning disabilities to express the attitudes of their teachers towards them. The validity of these instruments was done by two experts who carefully go through the items in the questionnaires and make necessary corrections. The reliability of these instruments was established through pilot study, where the instruments were administered at Government Day Secondary school Darawa which is not part of the study. The reliability of all the three instruments were calculated using split half reliability. This method was used to check the relationship between 2 pairs of scores on each instrument using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Teacher Nomination Inventory has the reliability index of **0.7** and **0.9** for the Teachers' Questionnaire lastly **0.9** for the Students' Questionnaire. Therefore, there is strong positive relationship between the scores. Thus; the instruments are reliable. Descriptive statistics of Simple table representations, simple percentages, mean and standard deviation was utilized in analyzing the data collected.

Results

Research Question One: What is the incidence of learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school Dutsin-ma, Katsina state?

Table 1 Table showing the incidence of Learning Disabilities in Damy Preparatory School Dutsin-ma, Katsina state.

SN	Gender	No of Pupils	No of learning disabled children	Percentage
1.	Male	56	9	16.0%
2.	Female	45	3	6.6%
3.	Total	101	12	11.9%

The above table shows the responses of the teachers on the incidence of learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school. From the above table, it shows that, there are 12 children identified with learning disability which is equivalent to 11.9% of the population of 101 children among Primary 1-5 in Damy preparatory school among which 9 are males with 16.0% and 3 females with 6.6%.

Therefore, the findings shows that, there are 12 pupils with learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school which is equivalent to 11.9%

Research Question two: what are the attitudes of teachers towards toward learning disabled children in Damy preparatory school Dutsin-ma?

Table 2 Table Showing Attitudes of teachers toward learning disabled children in Damy preparatory school Dutsin-ma, katsina states.

SN	Items	Mean	Decision
1.	Compare my performance	2.9	Positive
2.	Provide support	4.0	Positive
3.	Frustration and impatience	1.9	Negative
4.	Encourage to advocate and Seek assistance	3.3	Positive
5.	Embarrassed or ashamed	2.4	Negative
6.	Respect and value my contribution	3.6	Positive
7.	Hurtful comments	2.0	Positive
8.	Show no interest	2.5	Positive
9.	Believe in my abilities to succeed	4.0	Positive
10	Demonstrate patience and understanding	3.5	Positive
	MEAN TOTAL	2.9	Positive

Table 2 shows the responses of the children about their teacher’s attitudes towards them. The children feel their teachers don’t consider their learning disabilities when comparing their performance with the mean of **2.9**. The children agree that their teachers provide support and encouragement to them with the mean of **4.0**. The children disagree that their teachers don’t show frustration and impatience due to the student finding it difficult when performing certain tasks because of their learning disabilities with the mean of **1.9**. The teachers encourage self-advocacy **3.3**. The teachers treat them with respect and value their contribution **3.6**. The teachers don’t make hurtful comments **2.0** the teachers show some interest in helping them overcome challenges **2.5**. The teachers believe in their academic abilities **4.0**. The teachers demonstrate patience and understanding **3.5**. Overall, the children seem to have mixed experience. The mean total of the study is **2.9** which show that teachers in Damy preparatory school show positive attitudes toward children with learning disabilities.

Research question three: What are the methods used in teaching children with learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school Dutsin-ma, katsina state?

Table 3: Table Showing methods used in teaching children with learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school Dutsin-ma, katsina state

SN	ITEMS	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Collaborate, discuss ideas, and learn from each other in pairs or small group	3.5	Accept
2.	Demonstrate with the use of multimedia, real World	3.3	Accept
3.	Inquiry and discover the answers themselves.	2.5	Accept
4.	Act scenarios or play roles related to the lesson contents	3.1	Accept
5.	Incorporate activities that appeal to different senses	3.6	Accept
	MEAN TOTAL	3.1	Accept

Table 3 shows the responses of the teachers on analysis of methods used in teaching children with learning disabilities. Teachers frequently encourage collaboration and peer learning **3.5**. Often uses multimedia and real world example to teach children with learning disabilities **3.6**. Regularly uses role playing and scenario activities to enhance comprehension and creativity **3.1**. Sometimes guides children to ask questions and discover answers by themselves **2.5**. Frequently incorporate multisensory activities to support children with learning disabilities **3.6**. The total means score is **3.1** this shows that the teachers are using variety of methods when teaching children with learning disabilities in the school.

Discussions on Findings

Finding concerning research question one seeks to know the incidence of children with learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school. The first finding revealed that, there are 12 pupils discovered to have learning disabilities in Damy Preparatory School which is equivalent to 11.9%. This study is in line with the study of Eslami Shahrabaki Mahin¹, Ali Akbar Hghdoost, Nikseresht Afsaneh², Rafee Shahrabaki Hamideh, (2014) who conducted a study on the prevalence of learning disabilities in primary school children in Kerman city, the findings indicates that, the frequency of learning disabilities in Kerman primary school is 40.74%. Math disability is 13.9%, reading disability is 36.9%, and writing disability is 4.5%.

Finding for research question two: the study's initial finding shows that teachers in Damy preparatory school shows positive attitude toward children with learning disabilities. This study is line with the study of Adedayo Adesokan and Theophilus Oluwatimileyin Taiwo (2022), on a topic "Assessment of Teachers' Attitude towards the Inclusion of Children with Learning Disability in Oyo State" the study reveals that the teachers' attitude towards the inclusion of children with

learning disability in Oyo state is positive (mean=3.18). The study is also in concurrence with the study of Fareo, (2019) who carried out a study on attitude of teachers' to children with special needs and the results shows that, 32 (16.8%) teachers have negative attitude to children with special needs while 146 (76.8%) teachers have positive attitude children with special needs, while 12 (6.4%) teachers have neutral attitude to children with special needs.

Findings for research question three shows that, teachers of Damy Preparatory School are using varieties of teaching method to teach children with learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school. The finding is contrary with the finding of Wiggins (2017) who find out about one method of teaching which children centered method. He reported that interaction between the teacher and children during the teaching and learning process encourages the children to search for knowledge rather than the lecturer monopolizing the transmission of information to the learners. The estimated mean score (mean=1.79) recorded for the student-centered approach is marginally lower than that of the teacher-student interactive approach. This indicates that student-centered methods are also effective teaching approach. Furthermore, this study also goes contrary to the study of Lindquist, (2015) who found about two methods of teaching, which is teachers centered and student centered methods. He emphasized that, student-centered methods promote greater mastery of the subject than centralizing the flow of knowledge as a one way channel from the lecturer to the student. Application of teacher-centered methods produced results that were significantly lower (mean=1.36) comparative to those derived when using teacher-student interactive and student-centered approaches.

Conclusion

From the above findings on evaluation teachers' attitude toward children with learning disabilities in Damy preparatory school Dutsin-Ma local government Katsina state. It can be concluded that, these children are experiencing significant challenges with reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling and motor skills. Specifically, these children frequently makes careless errors in spelling, struggles with arithmetic, and exhibits poor motor coordination when using writing tools. Additionally, they have difficulty with pronunciation and clear speech, and struggle to understand and remember what they read. These characteristics exhibited by the student are mostly unidentified by the teacher because they have no experience or knowledge about learning disabilities and this prevent the early identification and intervention

The teachers shows positive attitude towards children with learning disability in Damy preparatory schools, Dutsin-ma local government Katsina state. The teachers encourage the children to advocate and seek assistance, they respect and value the childrens' contribution, they believed in the children abilities to succeed and the teachers demonstrate patience and understanding. This positive attitude gives students more confident upon themselves. The Teachers in Damy preparatory schools Dutsin-ma local government Katsina state uses varieties of teaching methods to teach children with learning disabilities. The study shows that teachers generally uses all teaching methods, strategies and approaches to support children with learning disabilities, with a focus on collaboration, multimedia, and multisensory activities.

Recommendations

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

1. The study on the teachers' attitudes towards children with learning disabilities, this highlights the need for a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

2. Teachers generally have a positive attitude towards children with learning disabilities, there are areas for improvement in their teaching practices, by providing teachers with professional development opportunities, incorporating inclusive teaching methods, and fostering a supportive classroom environment, this can better support children with learning disabilities and promote academic success and inclusivity.
3. Educators should create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, this lead to better academic outcomes and a more positive educational experience for children with learning disabilities. Stakeholders in Nigeria should adequately plan for quality education.

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