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Teachers' Perceived Barriers to Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore teachers' perceived barriers to inclusive education in Nigeria. A descriptive research design was used for the study. 120 teachers teaching in an inclusive classroom were purposefully selected. An instrument titled perceived barriers questionnaire was used ($r = 0.77$). One research question was raised, and one hypothesis was stated at a 0.05 level of significance. Data gathered were analyzed using mean and t-tests. The finding of the study revealed that the following are the barriers to inclusive education: the attitude of teachers, inadequate facilities, and lack of peer acceptance. The findings also showed that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived barriers to inclusive education based on gender ($p > 0.05$). It was concluded that teachers perceived that the attitude of teachers; inadequate facilities and lack of peer acceptance are the major barriers to inclusive education. Therefore, it was recommended that stakeholders should come to their aid by assisting them in any form.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an approach to education that seeks to promote equal access and opportunities for all learners, regardless of their background, abilities, or disabilities (Polat, 2011). Inclusive education is founded on the principles of equity, social justice, and human rights, and seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and exclusion in education systems (Grant & Gibson, 2013). In Nigeria, inclusive education has been recognized as a critical aspect of promoting equity and social justice in education systems, particularly considering the country's diverse population and many children with disabilities (Adetoye & Okediran, 2019). Despite the widespread recognition of the importance of inclusive education, the effective implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria has been hindered by several perceived barriers, particularly from the perspective of teachers.

A barrier to inclusive education is any factor or condition that makes it difficult for all students, regardless of their background or abilities, to fully participate and succeed in an inclusive educational environment. Barriers to inclusive education can take many forms, including lack of teacher training and support, negative attitudes, and beliefs about students with disabilities or other differences, inadequate resources and facilities, large class sizes, and cultural or linguistic barriers. These barriers can prevent students from accessing education and participating fully in the learning process, leading to disparities in academic achievement and social exclusion. Several studies have been conducted in Nigeria to examine the perceived barriers to inclusive education from the perspective of teachers. For instance, Aremu and Adepoju (2020) conducted a study in Oyo State, Nigeria, to investigate the challenges facing teachers in implementing inclusive education. The study found that inadequate training and professional development, lack of resources and facilities, negative attitudes and beliefs, and large class sizes were the major barriers to implementing inclusive education in Nigeria. Similarly, Akande and Daramola (2019) conducted a study in Lagos State, Nigeria, to examine the barriers to implementing inclusive education in primary schools. The study found that teachers faced several barriers to implementing inclusive education, including a lack of training and resources, negative attitudes and beliefs, and large class sizes.

The challenges facing teachers in implementing inclusive education. The study found that teachers faced several challenges when implementing inclusive education, including negative attitudes and beliefs, lack of training and resources, and cultural and linguistic barriers. Teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. The study found that negative attitudes and beliefs were a major barrier to implementing inclusive education. Many teachers expressed concerns about their ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities or other differences and believed that inclusive education would require too much additional work. Similarly, Giangreco *et al.* (2012) conducted a study in the US to examine the factors that influence teachers' decisions to refer students for special education services. The study found that lack of training and support was a critical barrier to inclusive education. Many teachers reported feeling unprepared to provide appropriate support to students with disabilities or other differences and lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively include all students in the classroom.

The barriers to inclusive education in developing countries; the study found that inadequate resources and facilities were a major barrier to implementing inclusive education. Many teachers in developing countries reported a lack of basic resources, such as textbooks and instructional materials, as well as inadequate classroom space and facilities, which made it difficult to provide effective instruction to all students.

These barriers have been identified in studies conducted across different countries and contexts, suggesting that they are persistent challenges facing teachers in implementing inclusive education. Based on this, the study examined teachers' perceived barriers to inclusive education in Nigeria.

Statement of problem

Inclusive education is an approach to teaching and learning that seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, can fully participate in and benefit from the education system. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of inclusive education, many teachers still face significant challenges when it comes to effectively implementing inclusive practices in their classrooms. As a result, it is important to better understand the perceived barriers that teachers face to develop effective strategies for supporting the implementation of inclusive education practices and promoting equitable access to education for all students.

Research questions are what the teachers' perceived barriers to inclusive education in Nigeria.

The hypothesis is H0 1: there is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of inclusive education in Nigeria based on gender.

2. METHODS

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. One hundred and twenty teachers teaching students in an inclusive classroom were selected using a convenient sampling technique. The perceived barriers questionnaire was the instrument used for the study. The questionnaire was constructed by the researchers, and it contains sections A and section B, section A measures the demographic data while section B contains 10 items with response choices of a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and strongly agree (SA), it was validated using test-re-test and a co-efficient of 0.77 was obtained. The researchers then administered the questionnaires and collected them back on the spot. The data gathered were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research question while the hypothesis was analyzed using a t-test.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Research Question 1: What are the teachers' perceived barriers to inclusive education?

Table 1 shows the teachers' perceived barriers to inclusive education in Nigeria. The following shows the teachers' perceived barriers to inclusive education in Nigeria follows: attitude of teachers affect implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria (3.60), peer acceptance is another barrier to inclusive education where attitude9), school environment is one of the barriers to inclusive education (3.19), they believe that inadequate training and professional development are major barriers to inclusive education (3.24), they believed that lack of resources for implementation of inclusive education is a barrier to inclusive education (3.18), parents fear in bring their children with disabilities to inclusive classroom is one of the barriers to inclusive education (3.23), schools practicing inclusive education do not receive adequate support from the stakeholders in education which make implementation of inclusive education difficult (3.26), Inadequate facilities are barriers to inclusive education in Nigeria (3.38), Language barrier makes implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria impossible (3.15), Inappropriate curriculum is a barrier to inclusive education in Nigeria (3.25), the weighted average was 3.28 which is more than 2.50, this shows that all the items are

barriers teachers perceived to inclusive education where attitude of teachers, inadequate facilities and lack of peer acceptance top the ranking.

Table 1. Table showing the percentage and mean distribution of teachers' perceived barriers to inclusive education.

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Rank
1	The attitude of teachers affects the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria	186(63.7)	100(34.2)	1(0.3)	5(1.7)	3.60	1 st
2	Lack of peer acceptance is another barrier to inclusive education in Nigeria.	124(42.5)	129(44.2)	39(13.4)	0(0.0)	3.29	3 rd
3	The school environment is one of the barriers to inclusive education	112(38.4)	127(43.5)	49(16.8)	4(1.4)	3.19	8 th
4	I believe that inadequate training and professional development are major barriers to inclusive education	110(37.7)	145(49.7)	34(11.6)	3(1.0)	3.24	6 th
5	The lack of resources for the implementation of inclusive education is a barrier	150(51.4)	49(16.8)	89(30.5)	4(1.4)	3.18	9 th
6	Parent's fear of bringing their children with disabilities to inclusive classrooms is one of the barriers to inclusive education	109(37.3)	145(49.7)	34(11.6)	4(1.4)	3.23	7 th
7	Schools practicing inclusive education do not receive adequate support from the stakeholders in education which make the implementation of inclusive education difficult	113(38.7)	141(48.3)	38(13.0)	0(0)	3.26	4 th
8	Inadequate facilities are barriers to inclusive education in Nigeria	152(52.1)	107(36.6)	26(8.9)	7(2.4)	3.38	2 nd
9	The language barrier makes the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria impossible	110(37.7)	118(40.4)	61(20.9)	3(1.0)	3.15	10 th
10	The inappropriate curriculum is a barrier to inclusive education in Nigeria.	107(36.6)	152(52.1)	32(11.0)	1(0.3)	3.25	5 th
WEIGHTED AVERAGE			3.28				

3.2. Ho1: there is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of inclusive education in Nigeria based on gender

Table 2 shows the summary t-test result on the teachers' perception of inclusive education in Nigeria based on gender. It was revealed that male teacher respondents had a mean score of 29.30 and standard deviation of 5.16 while female teachers' respondent had a mean score of 27.94 and standard deviation of 4.92, the t was 1.29, degree of freedom 118, F was 0.02 and significant level of 0.20 ($P > 0.05$). This implies that there was no significant difference between the teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in Nigeria based on gender.

Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there was no significant difference between the teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in Nigeria based on gender was not rejected.

Table 2. Summary of the t-test result on the teachers' perception of inclusive education in Nigeria based on gender.

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	F	Df	Sig	Decision
Perception	Male	30	29.30	5.16	1.29	0.02	118	0.20	Not Sig
	Female	90	27.94	4.92					

4. DISCUSSION

The finding of the study revealed that the attitude of teachers, inadequate facilities, and lack of peer acceptance are the major barriers to inclusive education, this finding is in line with the findings of [Akande and Daramola \(2019\)](#) who found that inadequate resources and facilities. Negative attitudes and beliefs are barriers to inclusive education. Similarly, the finding is following [Giangreco et al. \(2012\)](#) who reported that lack of training and support are the barriers to inclusive education. Another finding of the study showed that there was no significant difference between the teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in Nigeria based on gender.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the perspectives of teachers on barriers to inclusive education highlight the complexity of creating an inclusive classroom environment. Teachers play a critical role in identifying and addressing the various challenges that hinder the implementation of inclusive practices. As the study suggests, some of the major barriers to inclusive education include inadequate support, negative attitudes toward inclusion, lack of training and professional development opportunities, limited resources, and overcrowded classrooms. These barriers not only affect students with disabilities but also have implications for the quality of education provided to all students. Therefore, it was recommended that.

- (i) There should be provision of adequate support by school administrators, and educators to work collaboratively to remove these barriers and foster an inclusive learning environment that supports the needs and strengths of all students.
- (ii) Stakeholders in the field of education should provide professional development for the teachers by providing regular training sessions, workshops, and seminars that can help teachers develop effective strategies for meeting the diverse needs of their students.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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