
PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES OF PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OGOJA EDUCATIONAL ZONE**Florence A. Undiyaundeye, Julius Basake***Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Calabar, Nigeria
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria***ABSTRACT**

This study aimed at investigating the Psychosocial challenges of physically challenged secondary school students in the context of inclusive education in Nigeria. The study was carried out in selected mainstream schools in Ogoja Educational Zone of Cross River state. The researchers employed mixed method paradigm; both descriptive cross-sectional and naturalistic phenomenology designs to collect the data. Probability and non-probability sampling were employed to select the sample; 67 teachers/counselors. Tools used to collect data were questionnaires; for who were the key respondents, and interview guide for teacher counselors and the support staff. Convergent model was used to analyze and interpret the data. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0 and presented using frequencies, means and percentages while qualitative data was analyzed. The study found that learners with physical disabilities in integrated schools suffer low self-esteem, however, they enjoy warm peer acceptance from both teachers and the support staff relate indiscriminately. It was also found that teachers with special training education are very few in the mainstream schools and the need for disabled friendly school environment was alarming. It recommended that the Government should provide adequately educational services for persons with special needs and disabilities, strengthen National Educational Development and Research Centers (NEDRC), increase in-service training of teachers who handle learners with special needs, and provide qualified teacher- counselors in mainstream schools and rehabilitation centers. Parents need to be sensitized on issues concerning disabilities and their key role in assisting them to maximize their abilities and thus function at their best.

Keywords: Psychosocial challenges, Physically Challenged, Disabilities, Secondary School Students and Ogoja Educational Zone

INTRODUCTION

Education is a prerequisite to national development in every country. It is an indispensable means of unlocking and protecting human rights since it provides the environment required for securing good health, liberty, security, economic well-being and participation in social and political activities, (UNESCO, 2003). Good performance in education, training and research sectors immensely contribute to any country's national development. However, persons with disabilities have immense difficulties exercising the right to education. This situation exists despite the fact that Government policy documents have over time emphasized the centrality of education as a mechanism for poverty eradication and development (National Poverty Eradication Plan, 1999-2015). Education is an important facilitator for development, personal growth and poverty eradication, regardless of barriers of any kind, including disability. Access to education is the most fundamental aspect of the right to education. It is not enough to say that everyone has the right to education without putting in

place mechanisms to ensure and facilitate access, (MoE, 2012). Facilitating access to education for persons with disabilities entails the removal of policy, legislative and administrative obstacles and replacing them with positive measures in line with various international human rights instruments providing for equal access to education for persons with disabilities, (The Universal Declaration for Human Rights, Art.3).

The motivation for this study is as a result of a number of complaints aired through electronic and print media by parents and organizations of children with disabilities alleging violations of right to education for children with disabilities, Task Force on Special Needs Education, (2003). These parents allege that: some children with disabilities were denied admission to regular schools; other children had been expelled or forced out of regular schools, apparently because their disabilities impacted negatively on the academic or extra-curricular competitiveness of such schools, and lastly the Government had declined to fund some special schools started by parents of children with disabilities, (Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005).

According to the Salamanca statement (1994) every child has a right to be educated in an inclusive setting without discrimination. Sessional Paper No. 1. (2005) emphasizes inclusive education as one of the key strategies for facilitating access to education for children with disabilities. Similarly, the Task Force on Special Needs Education, (2003) recommended inclusive education as a key strategy for expanding access to education for children with disabilities. Broadly, this study reviewed literature regarding the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Nigeria. First, inclusive education clearly has benefits especially regarding the social integration of children with disabilities, their development and in removing stigma associated with disability. However, for inclusive education to yield positive results, a number of steps have to be put in place by the Government and other stakeholders. Indeed, the Government had not done enough to facilitate inclusive education; and the effect of this portrays inclusive education as an impracticable and ill-understood theory (Nigeria National Commission on Human Rights 2007).

In Nigeria, according to the Disability Standards of Education (2005), education opportunities for learners with special needs and disabilities are a major challenge to the education sector. The national education system has been characterized by inadequate facilities that respond to the challenges faced by learners with special needs and disabilities. The Disability Standards of Education rules, supports equalization of opportunities. It not only affirms the equal rights of children, youth and adults with handicaps to education but also states that education should be provided, 'in integrated school settings,' and 'in the general school setting'. Echoing the same Ndinda (2005) argues that there is need to link inclusive education with wide community-based programs for persons with special needs and disabilities

Education plays an important role in addressing the issues that impede the education of children with special needs in Nigeria. The overall goal of the Ministry of Education is to provide equal access to education to all learners irrespective of their physical or mental state in pursuit of the Government's commitment to achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015. Significant gains have been realized in the provision of education to children with special needs over the past six years. Among the major milestones in special needs education are the Disability Act 2003,

People with disabilities (PWD) make up 10% of the total population of Nigeria, approximately 3.5 million people (WHO, 2006). They are the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups and experience discrimination at all levels of society. A complex web of economic and social issues including gender inequality, create barriers within mainstream education, social and economic life to learners with special needs and disabilities. Therefore a disproportionate number of children and adult with special needs are unable to access quality education and are illiterate, Ministry of Education (MOE, 2009).

According to the Nigerian Constitution promulgated on 27th August 2010, persons with disabilities are entitled to enjoy all the rights and fundamental freedom set out in the Bill of Rights. They have the right to access education, institutions and facilities for persons with disabilities that are as integrated into society as a whole as is compatible with the interests of those persons, (art. 430). The Persons with Disabilities Act, (No. 14), of 2003 provides for the rights and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and the establishment of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, (NCPD). Section 18 of the Persons with Disabilities Act makes a broad statement on the rights of persons with disabilities relating to education. It forbids discrimination of children with disabilities in access to education by virtue of their disability. It requires learning institutions to take into consideration the special needs of persons with disabilities with respect to entry requirements, pass marks, curricula, examinations, school facilities and class scheduling, among others. Besides this requirement to learning institutions, the Act provides for the establishment of special schools (The Persons with Disabilities Act 2003).

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. To what extent does teachers related psychological challenges affect the physically challenged secondary school students in Ogoja Education zone of Cross River state?
2. To what extent does peers related psychological challenges affect physically challenged secondary school students in Ogoja Education zone of Cross River state?

METHODOLOGY

The design adopted in this study is the correlational survey research design. The purpose of correlational research is to determine the relationship among two or more variables. Correlational research according to Uzoagulu (2011), investigates a range of factors. This study was carried out in the Ogoja Educational zone of Cross River state of Nigeria. It was limited to all public secondary schools in the educational zones. The population of this study is 67 school counselors of secondary school in Ogoja Educational zone of Cross River State.

Two research instruments used for data collection were the Psycho social Challenges faced by the Challenged Questionnaire (PCCQ). The questionnaire were subjected to face validation by four lecturers in educational foundations in the faculty of education Ebonyi state University Abakaliki. To guide the validation, the researcher provided information on the title of the work, the purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Specific request was made for them to critically examine the items of the questionnaire and observation checklist/rating scale in terms of clarity of language, relevance of each item in providing information that will help to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The lecturers were also given free hand to either include or remove any item deemed appropriate or inappropriate respectively

The researcher administered the instruments (PCCQ) on the respondents directly with the help of six research assistants who were trained on how the instruments were to be filled and the modes of observing instructional materials and the equipment While Means and standard deviation were used to answer research questions one.

Data generated from the study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. In general, multiple regression statistic was used for data analysis Predictive coefficient were used to establish the coefficient of prediction (correlation)

1. Results on teacher related Psychological Challenges Facing Challenged students

The aim of this research question was to find out teachers' perception on psychological challenges facing challenged students in their secondary schools. Table 1 presents the results of the findings.

Table 1: Results of Teachers Perception on Psychological Challenges (n=20)

Factor/ Variable	Agree F		Uncertain F		Disagree F	
		%		%		%
The challenged in the class feel discriminated	12	60.0	-	-	8	40.0
They mostly have low self-esteem	18	90.0	-	-	2	10.0
They often seek for special attention	19	95.0	-	-	1	5.0
They show a sense of belonging in school	6	30.0	2	10.0	12	60.0
A high sense of self-esteem is portrayed by Challenged	2	10.0	1	5.0	17	85.0
They don't require to be treated in a special way	4	20.0	1	5.0	15	75.0
They are often aloof	16	80.0	-	-	4	20.0
They interact freely with others	7	35.0	-	-	13	65.0
They seems energetic / full of vigor	7	35.0	-	-	13	65.0
They are weaklings	12	60.0	-	-	8	40.0

The results on Table 1 showed that almost all teachers (90%) agreed that students portray low self-esteem, equally many (75%) disagreed that student presents a high sense of self-esteem. Fairly high number (60%) of the teachers agreed that the learners having physical disabilities feel discriminated, while only a few (40%) disagreed with the same. Majority of the teachers (95%) felt these learners seek special attention; this could be because of the obvious reason

that they suffer low self-esteem. Most of the challenged (80%) were often aloof and 60% showed signs of being weaklings. It was only 20% of the teachers who disagree that challenged were often aloof.

Westwood and Graham (2003) argue that substantive significance of integration is that the learner will get opportunity to model other physically handicapped learners who have adjusted despite the same obstacle of disability and the ultimate goal of integration is to help physically handicapped learners to be self-sufficient and culturally enriched.

2. Peers Challenges Facing Challenged students

This research question aimed at gathering information about psychological challenges students suffering from physical disability go through in their integrated school after rehabilitation. Table 2 show the results of the findings.

Table 2: Results on peers challenges facing challenged (n=48)

Factor/ Variable	Agree F	Uncertain F	Disagree F
	%	%	%
I see myself as a disabled person	11	22.9	67.7
I see myself as any other learner in my class	43	89.6	10.4
I'm appreciated and loved in my school	46	95.8	4.2
Nobody care about challenged in our school	11	22.9	72.9
In our school challenged are discriminated	4	8.3	89.6
challenged should be in the same school with others	39	81.3	18.8
I see myself as a happy person	37	77.1	14.6
People need to feel mercy on me	16	33.3	60.4
I am full of energy	29	60.4	29.2

The results on Table 2 shows that majority of learners with physical impairment viewed themselves as ordinary people (89.6%) and many (67.7%) disagree that they see themselves as disabled persons. It is apparent that those who feel accepted and loved by their family members see themselves like any other students, while those who feel rejected in the family see themselves as disabled. Majority of CHALLENGED describe themselves as happy people (77.1%) and energetic, while many (60.4%) feel they need no mercy from other learners. The findings are similar to Kauffman (2004) who asserts that a person with a disability does not necessarily need help. He says that most people with disabilities try to be as independent as

possible and will ask for assistance only if need be, such learners fall under the majority group (89.9%) who feel they are like any other learner. The study presents majority of the participants as wishing to remain integrated with ordinary students (81.3%). This high percentage agrees with Ndinda (2005) who argues that integration involves trying to make the lives of the persons with disabilities much like the lives of non-disabled person as possible.

Fourteen participants were involved in the interview, that is; four teacher-counselors and ten support staff. The results revealed that most students with physical disability suffer low self-esteem due to lack of self-acceptance. Majority of the participants unanimously agreed that students with physical disabilities suffer low self-esteem. Most teacher-counselors said that most of the issues presented during counseling sessions are issues on self-concept, self-acceptance and lack of basic needs. One counselor declared that rarely do the students go for one-on-one counseling sessions. Majority of the support staff said that the students suffer low self-esteem though they differed in what they thought could be the cause. Among the participants several felt it was due to poor self –concept which led to lack of self-acceptance. Relatively the same number felt that their low esteem was as result of family background where they are not accepted and are treated differently from the others while a few felt that low esteem was due to lack of basic needs. The following are some of the interview transcripts from the teacher counselors:

The participants' responses from the interview transcripts revealed that most of the learners suffering from physical impairment are stigmatized not only by the society but also by their own families. This contributes greatly to poor self-concept as the child advances in age. These findings agree with Kitty (2011), who argues that there is a relationship between psychosocial factors and effective integration which eventually lead to academic performance and as a consequence self-esteem is raised. Sitienei and Mulambula (2012) asserts that the degree of psychosocial development depends on severity of disability, age of its onset, the degree of visibility, emotional support and the encouragement the child gets from parents and other significant figures. The attitude of people towards the child's social status with his/her peers and the functionality of the affected body part can also affect the child's psychological development.

The findings indicated that the psychological challenges suffered by challenged are low self-esteem and poor self-concept. Most of the participants who participated in the study revealed lack of self-esteem and poor concept. These findings are in line with Corey (2002), who portends that for a person to achieve high self-esteem; physiological and psychological needs have to be met first. These needs include love, trust, and sense of belonging, food, security among others. Lack of these would lead to low self-esteem. From the conceptual framework the researcher highlights self-esteem, self-acceptance and self-concept as key psychological factors for smooth integration to a new environment. Similarly, Mutisya (2004) argues that if intervention is done to improve or remove the psychological barriers which come as a result family background there is possibility that integration would be easily embraced and the

learners with physical disability would be easily assimilated into the schools as well as in to the society.

The findings revealed further that only a small number of the teachers agree challenged show a sense of belonging in their integrated schools, this concurs with the study done by Bookheart (2003), which revealed that in spite of challenged being included in regular education they prefer being in special education where they feel safe and valued. However, the findings differ with the policy of Ministry of Education (2005) which portends that those children who are placed in special educational program due to physical disabilities which are not severe, may end up developing negative self-concept as they continue interacting with their peers who are severely challenged. This can reduce their opportunity to relate with other non-physically challenged peers diminishing their competence and self-esteem, alienate them from others, nurture a meanness of spirit and make them less persons than they could be.

In real life situation, physically challenged children find it very hard not only to fit into the world of non-disabled people but also in their own families where they are born and breed. Parent and significant others often find it hard to accept and love them unconditionally, as observed by the researcher. Psychologically as they grow up, they are affected and these precipitate low self-esteem as they advance in age.

The self-concept of a learner who is physically challenged depends on the way he/she views the disability and the way others treat them. In our society, the disabled persons are socially devalued and this gives clear evidence why disabled persons have low self-concept especially when they are in un-conducive environment. These children require a lot of emotional support from their parents, teachers, peers and the society at large. They need to be assisted to be mobile as possible through rehabilitation after which they are integrated into regular schools for inclusive education. When they are ignored, shown rejection and neglected, they develop negative self-concept. It is the school's responsibility to provide an amiable environment, where teachers and peers understand and encourage them to see themselves as any other learner. Moral support is needed from both school and home. Equally important is to sensitize parents on their roles to improve the lives of their impaired children.

CONCLUSIONS

Parents and siblings of challenged children have a leading role in molding of self-concept of learners with physical impairment. The way these children are brought up in the family dictates a lot on how they will view their disabilities, hence be integrated into the society. It is apparent that many parents of children living with disabilities find it hard to nurse the stigma of disability. From the findings it is clear that there is great need to sensitize the parents the understanding of children with disability from the onset, for the child to grow in an environment where he/she feels accepted and loved.

Recommendations of the Study

Following the findings of the study, the researcher has the following recommendations

1. Although the Government has made progress in the provision of educational services for persons with special needs and disabilities, there is great need for training and in service of teachers who handle learners with special needs.

2. It should also strengthen National Educational Development and Research Center (NEDRC) through increased budgetary allocation and equipping of appropriate tools and skills for early identification and assessment; for proper placement at an early age.
3. Increase ability in disability through creativity.
4. Take advantage of the things you can do.
5. Set realistic goals and be patient
6. Be your own advocate
7. Don't try to ignore or suppress your positive feelings

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