

An Appraisal of the Attitude of Secondary School Students towards the Physically Challenged in Edo State: Implications for Counselling

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Abstract

The study was designed to investigate the attitude of male and female secondary school students towards the physically challenged in Esan West Local government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The study focused on selected Senior Secondary School two (SS2) students. From a population of Five thousand six hundred and twenty (5620), Four hundred and twenty (420) students were selected, using the stratified random sampling technique. A well structured 28 items questionnaire was used for data collection. Questionnaire was validated by three experts in the department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology. Data was analyzed using the t-test. Results showed that secondary school students attitude towards the physically challenged is positive. The male students showed more favourable attitude towards the physically challenged than the female students. The result also showed that students who have close contact with the physically challenged are more favourably disposed towards them when compared to those without any close contact with the physically challenged. Arising from the findings, it is recommended that there is the need for integration of the physically challenged into the main school system in order to enhance the favourable attitude already existing towards the physically challenged. Since there exist some special school for the physically challenge persons from Edo State, arising from the findings it is recommended that integration no doubt may lead to proper adjustment and improved academic performance among the physically challenged persons.

Key Words: Appraisal, Attitude Secondary School Students, Physically Challenged and Counselling Services

Introduction

Over the years there has been a renewed awareness by several declarations of the United Nations on the need for equal educational opportunities for all children irrespective of disabilities. It is in line with this global trend that the Federal Government of Nigeria in her National policy on Education (FGN, 2013) instituted special education which has to do with

the education of children and adult who have some challenges with learning. In order to give credence, policy and meaning to the idea of equal educational opportunities for all children, irrespective of their physical, mental or emotional challenges, the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted the inclusion policy as the most realistic form of education since the physically challenged children are expected to live and work in the society. Worldwide, it has been estimated that about 650 million people live with disability and about a quarter of them are younger than 18 years (World Health Organization, 2011). The same report indicated that there are about nineteen (19) million physically challenged people in Nigeria. However, there are no reliable statistics as regard the number of people living with disability in Edo State. The United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2005) report, shows that eighty five percent (85%) of adolescents with disabilities live in developing counties where they are subjected to neglect, stigmatization, discrimination and inequalities in education and other opportunities.

Studies have shown that there exists negative attitude towards children with disability and this has been an obstacle to inclusive education (Christenseni and Onso, 2003) Birdswall, Graham and Pettinato (2005) reported that about forty (40) million of the world's out of school children have some form of disability with just 5% of these children estimated to complete primary school and many dropping out or never enrolling in school. Also, Yeo (2005), Barron, Amerrna and Fetcher (2007) found that physically challenged people constitute one of the poorest, socially excluded and marginalized groups within Nigeria. Moreover, in line with the above observation Okoh (2005) reported that the physically challenged persons in Nigeria are living in an environment that is hostile to their yearnings and aspirations, as a result of the attitude of people towards them.

Attitude can be described as effective tendencies of what an individual likes or dislikes, affinities and aversions that have been shaped by underlying beliefs and consistently expressed towards objects (Viney, 2006). No wonder Goreczny, Bender and Feistein (2011) opined that attitude toward individual with disabilities are often negative and deleterious, resulting in decreased opportunity and chances at successful integration into the community. Attitude expressed towards the physically challenged may be related to such variables as gender, age, belief, educational level, ethnicity, cultural bias and location of students.

Studies have shown that the attitude of the female students towards persons with disability often tends to be positive. Stovall and Sedlacek (2012) reported that females were more positive about the physical challenged, regardless of the nature of the disability. In a related study on the attitude of male and female students towards peers with disability in Nigeria by Olaleye, Ogundele, Deji, Ajayi and Adeyanju (2012), they found that 86.7% of the respondents agreed that they would not be bothered if a child with disability sat next to them in class, the study also revealed that female students had higher scores than males in terms of positive attitude towards the physically challenged persons. Also, in another study, Downs and Williams (1994) and Aliva (1983) found that the females held more positive attitude and compassion towards the physically challenged persons.

With the adoption of inclusive education as a way of promoting integration among children that are physically challenged and their peers who are not physically challenged, implementing the integration policy maybe a mirage in African countries (Garba, 2003, Ajuwon, 2008). No doubt there is the need for the improvement of society's attitude towards the physically challenged persons in order to ensure an environment for acceptance and integration. Kiber (2001) found that students have negative attitude towards the physically challenged persons, in situation where close personal contact is required, he also observed that students are more neutral or positive towards the physically challenged in less intimate situations such as employment or receiving help in the library. Also, Pat and Tomoe (2000) observed that students are more comfortable in having close personal contact with blind students than those in wheel chairs. Moreover, Bask (2001) reported that positive attitude towards the physically challenged was related to the level of degree of previous contact with individuals who were physically challenged.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN, 2004) categorized people with disabilities as follows: The physically and health impaired, the learning disabled, the hearing impaired, the behaviourally or emotionally maladjusted, the speech and language impaired, the visually impaired, the multiple handicapped and the mentally retarded. This study focused on the physically and health impaired, which include children who are crippled, deformed or neurologically impaired. Okeke (2002), opined that the physically challenged are children who have problems with the use of their joints, bones and muscles. Anyake (2002) noted that

the physically challenged are persons with disability as a result of neurologic, orthopedic or health impairment.

Attitude of peers to some extent may influence the success or failure of students with disabilities. It constitutes one of the major barriers to the education of the physically challenged persons. Studies have shown that some Teachers are not ready to accommodate children with disabilities in their classes (Okunrotifa, 1998). In some parts of Nigeria, the attitude of persons towards the physically challenged could be influenced by the belief that education of such children is a waste of resources.

Globally most physically challenged persons are eager to make their presence and impact felt. Being physically challenged may not be a major issue or problem to the physically challenged but the students' attitude towards them could be a greater threat. In a country where the attitude towards the physically challenged persons is positive and one of approval, they are in a better position to develop their potentials, and educational advancement. In Edo State at times, the admission of the physically challenged child into schools is done on humanitarian grounds. The presence of the physically challenged child in the school attracts the attention of other students. Some teachers may exhibit negative attitude towards them, this invariably may influence the attitude of other students towards them, thereby making the school environment not conducive and not comfortable for the physically challenged. This may affect the optimal development of their potentials, adjustment and academic achievement (Ogedegbe, 2015).

There is the need for an urgent investigation into the education of the physically challenged persons in view of the worrisome findings of Birdsall, Graham and Pettinato (2005) who reported that about forty (40) million of the world's out of school children have some form of disability with just 5% of these children estimated to complete primary school and many dropping out early or never enrolling in school. Could it be said that they drop out of school as a result of the attitude of other students towards them? The WHO (2011) estimated that in Nigeria there are about nineteen (19) million disabled persons. This is enough reason for a study such as this. The potentials of nineteen million persons should not be neglected because they may be in a position to contribute towards national development.

The physically challenged students may encounter barriers in the quest for education. Most of them enter school with the same qualification and aspirations with their non-

physically challenged students, they may perform poorer as a result of barriers and challenges that they encounter (Bradley, 2006). This may lead to frustrations and adversely degenerate to a level that the physically challenged persons may not be able to actualize his/her aspirations. The importance of attitude in the relationship of the physically challenged and their non physically challenged peers cannot be over emphasized, attitude has decisive effect on inter and intra personal relationship. A positive attitude no doubt may ensure acceptability and enhance adjustment in school for the physically challenged. Also this, no doubt may ensure the proper development of their potentials, academically, socially and psychologically. Therefore, with the introduction of the inclusion policy, there is the need to investigate the attitude of secondary school students towards the physically challenged students, this is with a view to ensuring that the physically challenged students are well adjusted in the school system for optimal enhancement of their potentials.. Consequently, the desire to investigate the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenged in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State where the government before the introduction of integration policy established some special school for the physically challenged students far away from the normal school system has motivated this study.

To guide the study the following hypotheses were formulated:

- (1) There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenged (mentally retarded) students.
- (2) There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards physically challenged (neurologically impaired students).
- (3) There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenged (blind) students.
- (4) There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenged (crippled) students.

Methodology

The design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey method. The design was deemed suitable because it offers the researchers the opportunity of obtaining information from the respondents on their attitude towards the physically challenged students. The population of the study is made up of male and female secondary school students in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The stratified

sampling technique was used in selecting four hundred and twenty (420) respondents, which is three percent (3%) of the population. The sample was stratified on the basis of sex of the subjects. Two hundred and ten males and two hundred and ten females in senior secondary school II (SSSII) were used for the study. Six schools were randomly selected for the study in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. A 28 item questionnaire was used for the study, titled 'An Appraisal of the Attitude of Students towards the Physically Challenged. The instrument was designed to measure students' attitude towards the physically challenged students. Specifically, it measured the attitude of students towards the mentally retarded neurologically deformed, the blind and the crippled. It was based on a four point Rating Scale, the subjects were to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement.

The instrument was validated by three experts in Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City. The experts approved the face validity of the instrument and endorsed it as having face validity, after removing items that were found to be of less significance to the study. To establish the reliability, the questionnaire was administered to 20 students who were not included in the study. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach alpha statistical method which produced a reliability coefficient of 0.79, thus indicating that the instrument was adequate for the study. The research instruments were administered by the researchers, 3 trained research assistants, each school counselors and teachers. A total of four hundred and twenty copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents. Responses obtained were used for data analysis. The instrument was administered on days in which these schools conducted their continuous assessment tests to ensure maximum attendance and response by the students. The hypotheses were tested using t-test of independent sample. All hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

Results

The results of the study are presented as follows: Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenged students (the mentally retarded).

Table 1: t-test result showing the attitude of male and female students towards the mentally retarded

Mental retardation	N	Group Mean	S.D	df	t-cal	t -tabulated
Male	210	3.28	0.47	418	2.92	1.96
Female	210	3.09	0.48			

The mean scores on the table I shows that there is a difference in the attitude of both male and female students towards the mentally retarded students. The male students expressed more positive attitude towards students with mental retardation compared to their female counter parts. The t-value of 2.92 was found to be higher than the table t-value of 1.96 at a probability level of .05 significant. The null hypothesis of no significant difference is therefore rejected. It is concluded that there was a significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards the mentally retarded students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenge (the neurologically deformed) students.

Table 2: t-test showing results on the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenged (the neurologically deformed)

Variables	N	Group Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t -tabulated
Neurologically deformed						
Male	210	3.05	0.44	418	3.91	1.96
Female	210	2.86	0.58			

From the analysis in Table 2, the mean scores of 3.05 for male and 2.86 for female shows that there is a difference in the attitude of both the male and the female students towards the neurologically deformed students. The male students expressed more positive attitude toward students with neurological deformities when compared to the female counterparts. The t-value of 3.9 was higher than the table t-value of 1.96 at 0.5 level of

significance. The null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there is a significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards students with neurological deformities. The male students expressed a more positive attitude towards the neurological impaired students.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenged (the blind) students.

Table 3: t-test showing results on the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenged (the blind) students.

Variables	N	Group Mean	S.D	Df	t-cal	T Tabulated
Mental retardation						
Male	210	3.13	0.45	418	3.41	1.96
Female	210	2.96	0.52			

From the analysis in the Table 3, the mean scores of 3.13 for male and 2.96 for female students reveals that there is a difference in the attitude of both male and female students towards students who are blind. The male students expressed more positive attitude towards students who are blind compared to their female counterparts. The t-value of 3.41 was greater than the table t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, and it was concluded that there is a significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards students who are blind.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards the physically challenged (the crippled) students.

Table 4: t-test showing result of the attitude of male and female students toward the physically challenged (cripple) students.

Variables	N	Group Mean	S.D	Df	t-cal	t-tabulated
Mental retardation						
Male	210	3.07	0.51	418	2.71	1.96
Female	210	2.93	0.52			

Results in the Table 4, shows the mean scores of 3.07 for male and 2.93 for female students. The result shows that there is a difference in the attitude of both the male and female students towards students who are crippled. The males expressed more positive attitude towards students who are crippled. The t-value of 2.71 was higher than the table value t-value of 1.96 at the probability level of .05 level of significance. Consequently the null hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that there is a significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards students who are crippled.

Discussion of Results

The major finding of this study is that male students have a more positive attitude towards persons living with disability. This shows that sex is a determining factor in the attitude of students towards the physically challenged persons. This finding is at variance with the study carried out by Alivia (1983) who noted that the female students were more favourably disposed to the physically challenged students.

Moreover, the findings of the study is also at variance with the findings of Stovall and Sedlack (2012); Ololeye, Ogundele, Deji, Ajayi and Dadeyanju (2012) who reported that females were more positive about the physically challenged persons regardless of the nature of the disability. However, the study revealed that there still exist some negative attitude towards the physically challenged persons mostly by the females regardless of the nature of the disability, in that the findings showed that the male students had more positive attitude towards the mentally retarded, the neurologically impaired, the blind and the crippled students. This no doubt may constitute an obstacle towards inclusive education.

Results also indicates that students who have close contact with the physically challenged are more positive in their attitude towards the physically challenged students, when compared to those who reported that, they may not be disposed to having close contact with the physically challenged students. That males were more favourably disposed to physically challenged students in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State would have been as a result of the nature of the sample which was from a semi urban location where culture would have influenced the findings, culturally the boys in this local government area are allowed to associate with people freely, while the girl child is restricted for fear of being negatively influenced or exposed to dangers of rape and pregnancy. Moreover, research findings have shown that boys or males maybe more predisposed to friendliness when

compared to the females, Abbey (1982) found that men demonstrate and overestimate their degree of friendliness compared to the females. Also Rajan and Venkat (2002) in their study found that authoritarian men exhibit friendliness more frequently compared to authoritarian women. Infact, result of the present study showed that the males showed more willingness to having a closer contact with the physical challenged persons.

Implication for Counselling

The findings of the study have far reaching counseling implications. There is the need for counsellors to be posted to schools where inclusive education is in operation, , this is with a view to ensuring that the physically challenged persons are well integrated and adjusted in the school system in order to optimally develop their potentials. There is the need for group counseling especially for those who are not physically challenged, the females in particular on the need to develop more positive attitude towards the physically challenged persons. Findings also indicates that there still exist negative attitude towards the physically challenged, consequently, the eclectic counseling approach may be adopted in counseling students generally on the need to have a more positive disposition towards the physically challenged persons. The eclectic technique is characterized by an attempt to reconcile inconsistent views or improve on them by the selective adoption of relevant approaches, with the sole aim of helping people change (Alika, 2007).

Conclusion

From the findings of the study it is concluded that male students expressed more positive attitudes towards the physically challenged persons compared to their female peers, and that there still exist some form of negative attitude towards the physically challenged persons which may constitute an obstacle to inclusive education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. There is the need for counselors, school principals and the Ministry of Education to organize orientation programmes for students with emphasis on the need to positively relate with their physically challenged peers.
2. Close contact with the physically challenged should be encouraged by education policy makers through jiggles on television and radio.
3. Counselling services should be provided for the physically challenged and non-physically challenged students in schools with the sole aim of encouraging good

rapport, adjustment and inter-personal relationships, for the optimal development of their potentials and capabilities.

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