

TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS OF THE REGULAR LEARNERS' BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS PUPILS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



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ABSTRACT

Of all categories of learners with special needs, persons with intellectual seem to face more social challenges in schooling than others. This may be attributed to their poor adaptive social skills. This study aimed at investigating perceptions of two categories of teaching staff of Abdulrasheed Adisa Raji Special School, Sokoto on behaviours towards pupils with intellectual disability of that school. A case study and structured questionnaire methods were used and a total number of 50 teachers were engaged in the research, employing the use of longitudinal case study design. The self structured instrument used for data collection was validated before use and the data collected was subjected to a descriptive statistics involving frequency counts and simple percentage. The study found regular learners of the school manifesting range of negative behaviours towards pupils with intellectual disability, some of which include labelling, rejection, avoidance behaviour, demonizing, behaviour and indifference as perceived and reported by the samples used. The study therefore concluded on the need for serious awareness campaign to bring about understanding and unconditional acceptance of this category of learners. In addition to that, retooling of the available teaching staff, recruitment of more qualified special teaching staff and more funding for catering the needs of learners with intellectual disability and their teachers, are highly required.

Keywords: *Teachers Perception, Regular Learner's Behaviour Manifestation, Pupils with Intellectual Disabilities, Partial form of Inclusive Education.*

Introduction

There is ample evidence that all culture, western and non western, exhibit reactions to disability and people with it, which form a continuum. Yet much literature on non western culture is dominated by descriptions of negative attitudes (Otooley, 1988). In school setting with partial or full inclusion systems, unconditional social regards and acceptance of all forms of persons with disability remained an important component. Members of such kind of school communities should not only be aware of such important need, but also try to achieve it in their schools as a valuable requirement for true inclusion.

Individuals with intellectual impairment have lived across human history, irrespective of cultural differences. They represent a micro part of the extremely wide variety of people in the human population at any one time. One improper behaviour that keeps surfacing against them by members of the society, is attempt to debase them because of their special needs conditions akin to maladaptive behaviour. In the past, their conditions earned them negative terms such as idiot, imbecile, feeble minded, mentally subnormal, moron, mentally deficit and retarded, commonly used in academic literature. With time, these terms were seen as stigmatizing and disparaging at least in literature. The plights of individual with intellectual disability seem to continue even in special school system, where they should be understood and supported.

It is worth noting that improper treatment of pupils with any form of special needs, because of their condition, debasing them for instance, or calling them names are sure signs of negative attitude towards them. Learners with intellectual disabilities are more likely to be prone to such negative reactions, in any form of integration setting and this may be attributed to their expressions of some form of maladaptive behaviour and poor social skills associated with their disability forms. In Abdulrasheed Adisa Raji special school, Sokoto, a whole section was provided for such category of learners, living with intellectual disability within the premises but away from other learners and fenced for security reasons. A number of them were admitted and to the best of the school capability maintained. The social context there will certainly give room for them to behave according to their condition/orientations and for people around them in the school environment to, naturally, react to them according to their personality's experiences and understanding. The important questions is, are other members of the school setting, especially learners, reactions towards pupils with intellectually disability, acceptable or not?

The purpose of this study is to explore and explain the current views of teachers of Abdulrasheed Adisa Raji special school, Sokoto regarding their perceptions of the negative behaviours manifested by other learners towards pupils with intellectual disability, and how to improve their conditions.

Intellectual Disability (ID) which was previously addressed as mental retardation and defined as a state of incomplete mental development in which an

individual is not capable of adapting to the normal environment and unable to cope with societal demands in order to maintain an existence void of supervision or external control. Intellectual disability originates during developmental period and brings about difficulties in development of conceptual, social, and practical skills. The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD 2010) describes ID as characterised by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour, which covers many everyday social practical skills. These disabilities, originate before age 18. Intellectual disability is increasingly being used as a synonym for people with significant below-average cognitive ability. This term is sometimes used as a means of separating general intellectual limitations from specific, limited deficits and also to indicate that it is not a psychological disorder or an emotional problem.

It is essential to be conversant with the level of classification of this condition in order to be able to know the right perspective and effective means of handling and relating with People with Intellectual Disability (PWID). American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR 2002) classified ID thus:

- i. Mild intellectual disability
- ii. Moderate intellectual disability
- iii. Severe intellectual disability
- iv. Profound intellectual disability
- i. **Mild intellectual disability** Persons with mild ID are otherwise known as educable. Their IQ range between 50-69, the physical characteristics are not as conspicuous as those with severe and profound intellectual disabilities in some cases. Development during their early life is slower than in normal children and developmental milestones are delayed. Their level of retardation becomes known when it comes to learning or in academic environment as their ability to use abstract concept, analyse and synthesize are impaired. Nevertheless, with early intervention and appropriate teaching methods, they have been found to be achieved readers and learn computing skills to grade six levels. According to Okeke, (2001) they are of assistance in doing house chores and running errands. They are about 80% of all cases, (AAMR, 2002)
- ii. **Moderate intellectual disability** – They are otherwise known as trainable. Their IQ range between 35 and 49 they learn self-care skills and perform unskilled and semiskilled work with supervision. They are efficient in handling house chores and farming. They have difficulties benefiting from academic work like their educable counterparts, but useful for economic purpose and in learning trades. Ten percent of this group are said to have moderate intellectual disability among this group, (AAMR, 2002).
- iii. **Severe intellectual disability** – This is the level of intellectual disability that is less extreme than profound intellectual disability. Their IQ ranges between 20 and 34, they have problems pronouncing and forming words, but they may

master very basic self-care skills and some communication skills with early intervention through considerable practice with time. Every aspect of their development in the early years is distinctively delayed. Many of them end up in homes. AAMR (2002) affirmed that there were about 3-4% of person with intellectual disability population.

- iv. **Profound intellectual disability** – persons with profound ID are grossly retarded. They have IQ scores less than 20, (AAMR, 2002). They cannot take care of themselves and in most cases have no language. Their capacity to express emotions is limited and poorly understood, Adams & Oliver, (2011). They may be able to develop basic self-care, communication and protective skills with appropriate support and training. Their retardation is often caused by an accompanying neurological disorder. They need high level of structure and supervision. Only 1% of them fall within this population. They are in most cases confined to homes. They cannot, in any case, benefit from any academic or teaching/learning activities.

Research Questions

The following questions were considered by the researchers.

1. What are the categories of teaching staff; by age, qualifications gender and experiences with special need learners?
2. Do teachers believe in the importance of inclusion?
3. To what extent do teachers agree that there are demonstrations of negative behaviours towards persons with intellectual disability?
4. What is common about teacher's perceptions of the negative behaviours being expressed to these pupils with intellectual disability?
5. What were some of the actions taken by teachers or school authority against the perceived behaviours of other learners towards learners with intellectual disability?
6. What are some of the behaviours manifested to learners with intellectual disability as perceived by their teachers?

Delimitation of the Study

This study is specifically meant to investigate teacher's perceptions of the regular learners' behaviour towards pupils with intellectual disabilities. The study was carried out at Abdurashheed Adisa Raji Special School, Sokoto, Sokoto South Local Governmnet Area of Sokoto State.

Methodology

This research was a descriptive survey research type. The design was longitudinal case study.

Population of the Study

The population for the study was 50 teaching staff of Abdurashed Adisa Raji special school, Sokoto comprising both special and regular teachers of the school.

Study Sample

The sampling population of this study comprised fifty classroom teachers, selected through stratified random sampling consisting of three categories of teachers, those with special needs education qualification, those with regular education and those with qualifications other than both. Thirty eight of the fifty samples returned their questionnaires. These were the ones finally used in this research.

Instrumentation

A self structured questionnaire was designed and used in the collection of data relevant to the study. It contained two sections, one for the respondents' personal information aimed at identifying their, gender, years of teaching experiences, qualifications and years of graduation. Ranges of the above items are to be indicated. The second section consisted of questions designed to evoke responses on the importance of inclusion, respondents observed improper behaviour expressed by others towards learners with intellectual disability, and the measures taken by teachers and the school authority, and their opinion on how to improve the situation.

Procedure

The researchers visited A.A. Raji Special School fifteen times for both distribution questionnaire and their collection. On day one, the principal of the school was approached, permission sought and granted for carrying out of the study, commencing with questionnaire administration. The researchers were warmly welcomed and assisted immensely by both the head of the school and his staff members. With such warmth, the researchers were able to explain their intention in details. The purpose and contents of the questionnaire were all explained. The administration and collection of the questionnaires took six weeks to complete.

The study used structured questionnaire method to investigate the nature of perceptions of teachers of the only Special School operating in Sokoto, regarding the treatment pupils with intellectual disability are receiving from other learners in the school, using longitudinal case study design. A total of 50 teachers from the school were selected through stratified random sampling method and a self structured instrument was used to collect relevant data from the samples, the data collected was subjected to a descriptive statistics in form of frequencies count and simple percentage.

Data analysis and Result

Data generated from the responses given were analysed using simple frequency count and percentages as presented below.

Fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed to the teachers involved in the study, thirty eight (38) were returned.

Age range of the respondents

The ages of the 38 respondents ranged between 26 and 59 years.

Gender count of the respondents

Out of the 38 respondents that returned their questionnaires 20 of the respondents were male consisting of 52.63% of the total, while 18 respondents from the sum were female, constituting 47.37%

Frequencies and percentages of responses

Table 1: On the Importance of Inclusive Education

S/N	ITEM	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1.	Not important	02	5.26%
2.	Some what important	02	5.26%
3.	Important	06	15.79%
4.	Very important	15	39.48%
5.	Highly important	13	34.21%
	TOTAL	38	100

Result of the analysis of percentages above, indicated a positive response of 2 respondents against the importance of inclusion constituting 5.26 percent of the total responses.

Responses of items 2, 3, 4 and 5 consisting of 36 respondents strongly for inclusion and that constitute 94.74 percent of the whole respondents that indicate positive dominance of the matter.

Table 2 on other learner's emission of negative behaviour towards pupils with intellectual disabilities (teachers view points)

S/N	ITEM	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1.	Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0%
2.	Disagree	1.0	2.63%
3.	Partially agree	3.0	7.90%
4.	Agree	21.0	55.26%
5.	Strongly agree	13.0	34.21%
	TOTAL	38	100

Analysis from table II above, display reactions of teachers on whether improper behaviours are being expressed to those learners with intellectual disability, or not. The table indicate their responses for or against the preposition. From the responses received on item 8 of the questionnaire (section B) the following list of negative behaviour were realised

Discussion of findings

From the responses given, the study discovered that a range of negative behaviours were observed, being manifested towards learners with intellectual disability, suggesting the presence of negative attitude within the minds of other learners of which they expressed towards pupils with intellectual disability sharing school premises with them.

Actions were therefore recommended based on the findings, in order to ameliorate the situation.

The behaviour manifested by other learners towards those of them with intellectual disability include labelling, which disparage them, rejection which imply refusal to share or accept pupils with mental deficiency; avoidance behaviour was also reported by the sampled teachers, also reported was unfriendly approaches as well as demonizing behaviour by seeing them as being possessed. There are also evidences of segregation and stigmatization noted by respondents which stand for a mark of disgrace. Respondents also reported such children as being considered insane. Hence, instead of pity learners with intellectual disability are hated which is showing intense dislike. However, indifference was also noted among the manifested negative behaviour.

Item 9 of the questionnaire B on list of negative behaviour was analysed and the following responses surfaced.

The responses recorded from the respondents on this section include motivation of togetherness and encouraging sharing behaviour on the part of regular learners, inculcating cleanliness to support expressions of love and kindness was also attempted by some teachers showing concern that was expected to bring about offering of personal help to learners with intellectual disability. Cultivation of sense of belonging was also reported as being implemented by some respondents. Another effort extended by the respondents was direct teaching of both categories of learners to learn to express tolerance and enduring behaviour that may yield relating to special needs persons more freely.

Item 10, which was the last item in the questionnaire, was on teachers suggestions on improving the situation of Abdulrasheed Adisa Raji special school, Sokoto, produced results as follows:-

In teachers opinion as gathered through their responses: All learners friendly atmosphere, need to be created; use of emphatic and sympathetic understanding should be encourage by all person sharing the school compound. Practising behaviour modification techniques as well as principles of teaching must inculcated. Team work

must be encouraged between all forms of teachers and learners. Opinion shared by some teachers is that pupils with milder cases of intellectual disability should be admitted into regular classes. The responses include creation of well equipped vocational section with its proper human and materials resource attached; rationing admission of student that encourage healthy learning and intensification of medical care for the learners was also suggested. Teachers are also of the opinion for the formation of association(s) for supporting persons with intellectual disability and others. Mention was also made of training and employing of more special teachers for both state and the school. Another important area mentioned was in-service training, seminar and workshop for retooling the teachers to address the shortcomings. Lastly, proper orientation of teachers and other students relating to handling of those learners with intellectual disability was indicated as important.

Recommendations

The number of students with intellectual disabilities keep rising. At the time of this study, they are 81 on admission role, and parents show high level of interest by bringing them to school every day. We recommended that:

- * Government support the courage of these parents by assuming more highly committed stance in their support, and commitment in all of its ramification.
- * As it became plain to us, through this study, that teachers perceived a number of negative behaviours being expressed to learners with intellectual disabilities, by other learners (and perhaps some other members of the school community); We recommend that the entire staff of the school need to join hand with the school authority in effecting positive attitudinal change that is capable of changing the negative experiences of such children.
- * Learners with mild and moderate cases among them need to be included into the regular system, while those with severe and profound cases be maintained in separated section.

Conclusion

Learners with intellectual disability in A.A. Raji special school or elsewhere are human beings and should be treated as such. They have every right like other regular learners because they are part of the society. They need to be helped in integrating well into the society they belong to and this could be achieved better through inclusive education which is certainly capital intensive. This could be achieved better, through adhering to the principles of inclusive education or partial form of it. Both of them are capital intensive and require serious governmental financial intervention. To improve the worth and lives of learners with intellectual disability under the partial inclusive program, teachers of that school need to be retooled, general campaign aimed at raising the awareness of all individuals working or visiting that school, there is also need for recruiting more qualified special teachers

to handled such group of learners, there is more attention needed and more financial backing required in order to succeed.

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