

PERCEIVED SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES OF HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENT IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE



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ABSTRACT

The inclusion of students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools came as educational policies in Nigeria in order to eliminate the risk of students with hearing impairment being excluded from the teaching and learning that goes on in schools. One amongst other benefits of inclusion was not only academics but also for the development of social relation between students with hearing impairment, their teachers, hearing students and the society at large. This study examined the perceived social and educational problems encountered by students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State. Two research questions guided the research. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Twenty (20) students with hearing impairment from all inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis in Rivers State were the respondents. The data was analysed by using descriptive statistics of percentages and means. The findings revealed amongst others that inability to interact with their hearing peers and inadequacy of teaching and learning materials respectively are the perceived social and educational problems aforesaid. More so, there was no significant difference in the social and educational problems encountered by hearing impaired students in inclusive schools on the basis of gender. Among the recommendations, therefore made are the need to encourage social interaction among students with hearing impairment and their hearing peers as well as government provision of resources that can assist teaching and learning.

Introduction

The hearing impaired is a technically accurate description of someone who is hard of hearing or who has no hearing (North Carlifonia Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (NCSHHHP), (2011) cited in Bolanle (2014). These group of persons are found in every community and are termed to be having hearing impairment. Therefore, Hearing impairment is a generic term that describes the condition that reduces hearing acuity of an individual and makes it impossible for such to perceive and interpret auditory signals or sound, (Okuoyibo 2010). Similarly, Aiyeloso (2009) defined Hearing impairment as lack of or reduction in the ability to hear clearly due to problem somewhere in the hearing mechanism. Hunt and marshall, (2005) cited in Aiyeloso et al, (2020) further stated that Hearing impairment is a generic or umbrella term that covers all types and degrees of hearing loss. This is in conformity with Ebi, (2017),

that hearing impairment encompasses the whole range of auditory/hearing disorders, including the deaf and persons with very mild loss who may understand speech without much difficulty. This implies that there are two groups of individuals with hearing impairment; the 'deaf' and the 'hard of hearing'. The federal register, (2005) cited in Ozoji, (2016) defined 'deafness' as a severe hearing impairment that impede the processing of linguistic information through hearing with or without amplification, while 'hard of hearing' are those with either permanent or fluctuating impairment but can process information from sounds through the help of hearing aid. Okeke, (2011) cited in Aiyaleso, (2020) simply defined the 'deaf' as persons whose sense of hearing is not functional for the ordinary purpose of life while the 'hard of hearing' are those whose sense of hearing is defective but still functional with or without amplification. Based on the forgoing definitions, students with hearing impairment are those who have hearing difficulty.

The inability to hear and be heard have a devastating consequences on the teaching, learning and socialization of students with hearing impairment as they are known to encounter varying degrees of hearing and communication challenges which makes interpersonal communication that is of utmost need in typical classroom setting and the society at large cumbersome. Consequently, Education is a fundamental human right that should be accorded to every human being. In realization of the role that education play in this regards and for national development, there has been general quest for quality education worldwide. This advocacy for quality education gave rise to the inauguration of Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien in Dakar (2000) and also the recent sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in (2015), (Ezeugwu et al, 2018).

Olododo, (2018) defined inclusive education as an educational option or programme carefully designed to educate special needs learners with diverse needs within the restructured mainstream or school community. Furthermore, Inclusive Education is the full integration of learners with and without special needs into the same classrooms and school and thereby exposing them to the same learning opportunities (Abdul et al, 2019). Ladipo (2002) cited in Ezeugwu et al,(2018) defined inclusive education as the education of children with special needs and the normal children, learning together in ordinary pre-school provisions, schools, colleges and universities with appropriate networks or supports. Consequently, inclusive education is practiced when teaching children in regular classrooms with handicapped and non-handicapped children to the fullest extent possible (Bila, 2020). From the foregoing definitions inclusive education therefore provides all necessary resources needed by and gives equal opportunity for the students with hearing impairment and their normal hearing counterparts to study together in the same classroom thereby enhancing and strengthening relationships in class and during extra-curricular activities.

Most students with hearing impairment who find themselves in the midst of normal hearing students are perceived to encounter social and educational problems. They are often demeaned and are exposed to disrespect as they may be ridiculed by

their hearing counterparts in relation to the type of their disability (Isaiah & Onitada, 2019). This results in the students with hearing impairment developing low self-esteem which in turn brings about anti-social behaviours such as aggression, feeling of self-defeat amongst others.

Generally, the social development (through socialisation) of a child is closely related to his or her normative cognitive development. If the child's cognitive functioning is limited, or development is hampered by certain conditions such as hearing impairment, social and normative development will likewise be lacking. This implies that, the child's inability to hear impedes the learning of various socially acceptable habits as socialisation is the process by which a child learns and internalizes attitudes, values, competences and roles that are acceptable in the individual family, community, school and the society at large.

Therefore, it is believed that the hearing impaired child encounter problems acquiring and understanding moral behavioural norms as it is mainly through language that these can be transferred from one person to another. In the same vein, Stinson and Whitmire, (2000) stated that the socialisation of the hearing impaired child is deficient since the inability to hear deprives the child of the most expedient guidelines, for moulding of behaviour. Hence, social integration may seem to be one of the major challenges of students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools (Bolanle, 2014).

The inability of the hearing impaired to communicate freely and understand language properly, to a large extent results to isolation from their hearing contemporaries. This was supported and expanded by Scheetz and Lee, (2013) who stated that students with hearing impairment may experience feelings of loneliness because they cannot easily participate in social activities with peers due to communication difficulties. They may also begin to identify themselves as helpless individuals and avoid participating in school activities.

On the contrary, Stinson, et al.(2000) cited in kigotho (2018) opined that some students report that though they participate in social activities with hearing peers, their relationships are short-term and casual and that they feel emotionally secure only with other peers who are hearing impaired, although some are emotionally secure with hearing classmates. In informal settings like the canteen, others mentioned the difficulties of socializing in such noisy environments and that interpreters were not available for "social or impromptu meetings (Hyde and Power, 2003).

A study of public schools in Australia that focused on the social status of hearing impaired students compared with hearing students discovered that a large number of hearing impaired students were rejected by their hearing peers as compared to only a small number of hearing students who, like the deaf students, also became social misfits (Cappelli, 2015). This is in consonance with studies by various researchers such as Musselman et al, (1996); Stinson and Anita (1999). Isaiah & Onitada (2019) explained that students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools often have low self-esteem, few friends and minimal interaction with their hearing

counterparts and as such they often feel neglected or rejected which leads to isolation and loneliness.

Although the goal of inclusive education is to promote the academic and social integration of students, irrespective of hearing status, hearing impaired students in inclusive schools often face social isolation and difficulties in academic participation (Stinson and Antia, 2015). Classroom participation and a sense of academic integration are acknowledged as important for the academic success of all students (Tinto, 2013), this is often lacking for hearing impaired student which may be attributed to paucity of instructional materials.

Ozaji et al, (2016) opined that learning materials and teaching approaches should be constantly reviewed and modified for to suit the hearing impaired. Oyewunmi cited in Mpofu, (2013) further explained that the deaf and hearing impaired students tend to be visual learners – and this is difficult in an environment where much essential information is delivered exclusively by word of mouth. This leads to exhaustion as the students with hearing impairment loses the ability for selective hearing with increased difficulty suppressing background noise which makes the learning environment stressful. Students may need to use assistive technology such as FM, hearing aids, signalling devices, assistive listening systems etc to effectively participate in class.

Furthermore, effective participation by hearing impaired students in the classrooms may be hampered due to the approach employed to communicate the content of the topic. Fox and Ysseldyke, (2017) stated that inclusion was found to have failed in part because instructors were unable to meet the demands of modifying and delivering an appropriate mode of teaching students with hearing impairment. Isaiah and Onitada, (2019) further stated that that inclusion of students with hearing impairment with normal hearing counterparts makes learning problematic because most of the teachers lack the knowledge of communicating through sign language. More so, most regular teachers lack understanding of deafness and hearing impairment as they may speak extremely fast, move through lesson materials very rapidly and maybe insensitive to the needs of hearing impaired students trying to follow the lecture through an interpreter if available. Hence, Underwood, (2015) opined that the basic knowledge of hearing loss will make an instructor more comfortable working with a hearing impaired student, they will be able to make appropriate adaptations and accommodations in teaching strategies, activities and curriculum to meet the needs of the hearing impaired students.

The inconsistency of sign language interpreters, and classroom arrangement (physical arrangements in the classroom) may obstruct the learning process of the hearing impaired. While teaching in classrooms, teachers must keep their faces visible especially for hearing impaired students. A preferable sitting place for them would be in the front. However, left or right side of the room can be selected according to the better ear of the student. (Lockwood 2011). In contribution, Waayer-Engles, (1996)

cited in Kigotho (2017) stated that a hearing impaired student misses out if an instructor gives instruction while writing on the board, therefore the availability of an over-head projector will be an added advantage and a good alternate solution as the teacher can face the class all the time he/she is talking while still providing visual support.

Therefore, teachers need to learn the effective ways of communicating with hearing impaired students as well as have guidance about the classroom acoustics and hearing devices used by the hearing impaired students (Lanfer, 2006).

Statement of the problem

The school is a social and learning agent that provides the condition upon which a child may be formally educated in order to attain educational goal. Many countries have made inclusive education a vital issue of Government educational policy with Nigeria not exempted as some Nigerian schools are already practicing the inclusive system. It is widely accepted that inclusion maximizes the potential of vast majority of students, ensures their rights and is widely preferred educational approach for the 21st century, Tirussew, (2005). However Gazahagn (2013) stated that students with hearing impairment miss numerous opportunities, and face enormous challenges in the inclusive schools. This is in concurrence with Isaiah and Onitada (2019), in a study of challenges of students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools carried out in Abuja. The study therefore investigates perceived social and educational problems encountered by students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers state.

Research questions

1. What are the social problems encountered by students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis?
2. What are the educational problems encountered by students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the social problems encountered by male and female students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt.
2. There is no significant difference in the educational problems encountered by male and female students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This was so chosen because the design is more effective in dealing with people's opinions. The population of the study comprised of all students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. Purposive sampling technique was used on a total of twenty students with hearing impairment from the schools that are running inclusive education in Port Harcourt metropolis. The instrument used for the collection of data was a questionnaire titled perceived social and educational problems of hearing impaired students in inclusive schools (PSEPHIIS) designed by the researcher to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument had two section; A and B. section A provided demographic information of the respondents while section B contained 10 items. All items were rated on a four-point likert scale: strongly agreed (SA) 4, Agreed (A) 3, Disagreed (D) 2, and strongly disagreed (SD) 1. The instrument was face and content validated by experts in measurement and evaluation and special education. A descriptive statistics of percentages and means were used to describe the data obtained from the 20 students. Weighted average mean was used as the bench mark for deducing major findings.

Results

Research question one:

What are the perceived social problems encountered by students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis?

Table 1: descriptive analysis of perceived social problems encountered by students with hearing impairment

S/N		Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	Mean
1.	I find it difficult to interact with other peers with normal hearing	N=15 %= 75	N=3 %= 15	N=1 %= 5	N=1 %= 5	3.6
2.	Though I like sporting activities I am not allowed to participate	N=15 %= 75	N= 3 %= 15	N= 1 %= 5	N= 1 %= 5	3.6
3.	The problem of low self esteem due to	N= 10 %= 50	N= 5 %= 25	N= 3 %= 15	N=2 %=10	3.1

	my present condition					
4.	I want only those with hearing impairment to be my friends	N=15 %=75	N=4 %=20	N=1 %=5	N=0 %=0	3.7
5.	Not having an interpreter hampers my integration with my other hearing peers	N=16 %=80	N=4 %=20	N=0 %=0	N=0 %=0	3.8

Weighted average = 2.5

From table 1 it is realised that the difficulty to interact with other hearing peers is a social problem for it has a mean score of 3.6 above the weighted average of 2.5. More so, not been allowed to participate in sporting activities despite their interest in sport is considered a social problem as it has a mean score of 3.6 which is greater than the weighted average of 2.5. Having a low self-esteem due to their present condition is also a social problem with a mean score of 3.1 which is higher than the weighted average of 2.5. Having only those with hearing impairment as friends is a social problem with a mean score of 3.7 hence the weighted average is 2.5. Not having an interpreter hampers integration with other hearing peers pose a social problem since it has a mean score of 3.8 which is significantly higher than the weighted average of 2.5.

Research question two:

What are the perceived educational problems of students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis?

Table 2 descriptive analysis of perceived educational problems of students with hearing impairment.

S/N		Strongly agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	Mean X
6.	Lack of attention from the school personnels	N= 8 %= 40	N=10 %= 50	N= 1 %= 5	N=1 %= 5	3.2
7.	I lack interest in schooling	N=3 %15	N=2 %=10	N=10 %=50	N=5 %=25	2.1

8.	Inadequacy of teaching and learning materials	N=15 %75	N=5 %=25	N=0 %=0	N=0 %=0	3.7
9.	Teachers give more attention to my hearing peers while teaching	N=10 %=50	N=6 %=30	N=3 %=15	N=1 %=5	3.1
10.	Interpreters are not fully involved in teaching and learning in my school	N=16 %=80	N=4 %=20	N=0 %=0	N=0 %=0	3.8

Weighted average 2.5

From table 2 above, it is observed from the above that lack of attention of the school personnel is an educational problem evidenced in the mean score of 3.2 that is greater than the weighted average of 2.5. The lack of interest in schooling is not considered an educational challenge with a mean score of 2.1 that is less the weighted of average of 2.5. Furthermore, the inadequacy of teaching and learning materials pose an educational problem with a mean of 3.7 that is significantly greater than the weighted average of 2.5. Teachers give more attention to the normal hearing peers while teaching is considered an educational problem with mean score of 3.1 that is greater than the weighted average of 2.5. The respondents accepted as an educational challenge the interpreters not fully involved in teaching and learning with mean score of 3.8 that is significantly greater than the weighted average of 2.5.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the social problems encountered by male and female students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Table 3: A t-test analysis showing differences in mean scores in the problems encountered students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools based on gender

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	Cal t	Crit t	Remarks
Male	10	3.8	1.03	18	0.89	1.73	Not Sig.
Female	10	3.4	0.97				

Significance at 0.05 level

The data in table 3 above presented the differences between the mean score rating of the social problems encountered by male and female students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis of Rivers state. The table shows a calculated t-value of 0.89 and df of 18. Since the t-cal is lesser than the t-crit; it therefore implies that there is no significant difference in the social problems encountered by students with hearing impairment based on gender. Hence the hypothesis is accepted and retained.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the educational problems encountered by male and female students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis

Table 4: A test analysis showing the differences in mean in educational problems encountered by hearing impaired students in inclusive schools based on gender

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	Cal t	Crit t	Remarks
Male	10	3	1.05	18	0.46	1.73	Not Sig.
Female	10	3	1.05				

Significance at 0.05 level

Data in table 4 above shows the difference in mean scores in the educational problems encountered by male and female students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis of Rivers state. From the table the t-cal 0.46 with df 18 is less than t-crit, hence there is no significant difference in the educational problems encountered by students with hearing impairment based on gender. The hypothesis is therefore accepted and retained.

Discussion

The research questions which guided this study focused on perceived social and educational problems encountered by students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State. The findings showed that the difficulty to interact with other hearing peers is a social challenge. This can be attributed to inability to communicate and be communicated to. The study further found that although they are very much interested in sporting activities, they are not allowed to participate, this of course leads to rejection and isolation. Hence

communication is a barrier to socialization of the hearing impaired students in inclusive setting. This was corroborated by Isaiah and Onitada, (2019) that the child with hearing impairment is largely isolated from his or her hearing counterparts, because of the inability to communicate freely and understand language properly. In this study it was observed that having only those with hearing impairment as friends is a social problem. This is true to the fact that the United Nations educational scientific and cultural organisation UNESCO, (1994) cited in kusimo and Chidozie, (2019) stated that the orientation of inclusion in regular schools is an effective means of building a society without discrimination. But a situation where they prefer to be with their hearing impaired peers to their hearing counterparts shows that there is a display of discrimination and feeling of been unsecured. This is in agreement with Stinson et al,(1996) who disclosed that many student reports although they interact with hearing peers, their relationships are short-term and casual and that they feel emotionally secure only with other friends who are hearing impaired, although some are emotionally secure with hearing classmates. The findings from the study disclosed that not having an interpreter hampers integration with other hearing peers under the study is perceived as social hindrance. This indicates the willingness to associate and integrate with the hearing peers but are handicapped as a result of the absence of interpreter. This is supported by Hyde and Power, (2013) that the hearing impaired encounter difficulties in socializing in the absence of interpreters.

The second research question addressed perceived educational problems faced by students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools, it was found that lack of attention of the school personnel is considered an educational problem. This is regarded as such because the importance of these personnel in the school cannot be overemphasized. Thus, Wilson and Getzel, (2011) stated that in a University setting, administrators and faculty members play key roles in creating a supportive environment for students with disabilities; many intend to interact with students with hearing impairment but tend to create these barriers unintentionally. In addition, teachers give more attention to the normal hearing peers while teaching is considered an educational problem as it affects their academic achievement more when compared to their hearing peers. This is further buttressed by Blood et al, (2008) that Students with hearing impairment are evaluated more negatively by teachers and hearing peers on dimensions such as intelligence, achievement, and personality through a phenomenon known as the hearing aid effect. Finally, the study showed that the interpreters not fully involved in teaching and learning pose a huge challenge to the hearing impaired. The services of the interpreter in an inclusive setting for effective learning, cannot be overemphasized as they play the role that enhances passage of information through their mode of communication to the hearing impaired. This is in agreement with Stinson et al, (1999) that One of the most salient characteristics of learning by hearing impaired students in mainstream classrooms is the students' dependence on a third party to provide access to information. Information is received

by the student through interpreting and/or real-time captioning during class sessions, or through notes (note taking or printouts) outside of class. Hence the need for interpreters in inclusive schools cannot be overlooked. From the study it was revealed that there was no significant difference in the social and educational problems encountered by students with hearing impairment in inclusive schools on the basis of gender. This corroborates the findings of Isaiah and Onitada (2019) who stated that students with hearing impairment are exposed to same challenges in regular schools irrespective of the gender.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, conclusion can be drawn that there are social problems/ challenges arising from the inability to hear and communicate effectively and educational problems arising from lack of teaching/learning materials in inclusive schools in Port Harcourt metropolis of Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Social interaction among students with hearing impairment and their hearing counterparts should be highly encouraged.
2. Both teachers and hearing students should be made to learn sign language to enhance communication with the hearing impaired students.
3. Sign language interpreters should be made available for students with hearing impairment.
4. Government should provide resources that can improve teaching and learning among students with hearing impairment.

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