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Teachers' Attitude Towards Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Rivers State

***Bobmanuel, D. P., & Bright-George, J. W.**

Department of Special Needs Education and Rehabilitation Science Rivers State University, Nkpulu-Oroworkwo, Rivers State

***Corresponding author email:** dumo.bobmanuel@rsu.edu.ng

Abstract

The study was on the attitude of teachers towards inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorders in Rivers State. Descriptive survey design was employed for the study. Four (4) specific objectives were stated in the study. Four (4) research questions and four (4) null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population comprised teachers in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt local government area in Rivers State. A sample of 121 obtained through cluster and proportionate stratified random sampling techniques were used for data collection. A self-constructed questionnaire titled: Teachers' Attitude toward inclusion of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder Scale was used to elicit data. The instrument was validated by experts in center for children development and communication disorders (CCDCD). A trial testing of the instrument was conducted and a reliability coefficient of .81 was obtain from Cronbach Alpha estimate. The data collected was analyzed using percentage, mean, and standard deviations to answer the research question and ANOVA and independent t-test to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was revealed that most of the teachers in junior secondary schools in the study area have negative attitude towards students with autism spectrum disorders. It was recommended that River State government should implement mandatory training programmes for teachers in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State, to improve their attitudes towards students with ASD.

Keywords: Attitude, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Inclusion, Students, Teacher

Introduction

Teachers are of great importance to the educational development of students with autism, especially in improving their social, behavioural and communication skills. They play a vital role for students with autism in many aspects of intervention, management, and education. Hence, the attitudes of teachers do not only determine the academic performance of challenged children; but also, the social behaviour of children in learning, and in the school performance at large.

Attitude is the perception or response of an individual towards animate or inanimate objects or persons. Binder and Niederle cited in Offer and Akinlosotu (2017), defined attitude as one's positive or negative judgement about a concrete subject. This means that the attitude of teachers toward students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) could be either positive or negative. Students with ASD need warm and friendly atmosphere to learn, socialize and develop appropriately especially in educational setting. Consequently, positive teacher attitude towards the inclusion of students with ASD into the inclusive classroom is imperative in creating a positive least restrictive learning environment.

The classroom teachers are the key player in adapting curriculum and instructions to meet the needs of students in an inclusive setting; therefore, the attitude of the teacher is very sensitive to the academic adjustment of the student with ASD in the classroom and in society at large. Gómez-Marí et al. (2022) opined that the attitude of

teachers towards students with ASD is of concern because most teachers are not aware of the nature and perhaps appropriate interventions and ways of handling them. Having students with ASD within the regular classroom can be more challenging for the regular teacher because of the frustration that presents itself with the disorder. Therefore, a teacher's attitude demands more than just the mastery of subject content or the conventional techniques of managing the general classroom. The teacher must possess positive attitude as a professional virtue to be able to cope with the challenges of students with ASD.

The role of teacher's attitude cannot be overemphasised in teaching students with ASD. The teacher's attitude strongly influences their perception towards the students. Ohanele (2017) believes that teachers' attitude is a prerequisite to a successful inclusion of students with ASD. Effective teaching by the teacher all hinges on the positive attitude, perception and adequate knowledge toward the child. The attitudes toward students with ASD can reflect acceptance, rejection and discrimination through positive or negative statements made or action taken or a feeling developed and expressed toward the student. Dukmak (2013) opined that teacher's attitude is expressed in the level of inclusion of a child in the classroom irrespective of his disability, in this case autism. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is neuro developmental disorder characterized by impaired communication and social interaction. This disorder has major implication for individuals academic functioning, social development and community adjustment (Ohanele, 2017). In recent years, there is increase in the prevalence of diagnosed cases worldwide, which currently affects 1/150 Nigeria children. According to Centre for Disease Control (2007), the prevalence of autism was 6.7 per 1000 children in 2000 and increase to 1-150 children in 2007. With the increase in the ASD prevalence, the demand for inclusion of students with ASD into inclusive classroom is also increasing. Tarubhi and Neelima (2018) opined that parent reported data of the prevalence of ASD among school age children indicted a significantly higher rate of 1-50 births in 2011-2012.

The increase in the number of school age (6-17 years) diagnose with ASD reflects the need for inclusion of children with diverse developmental disorder in the regular education classroom. The term inclusion means the students with ASD should be educated alongside typically developing students in the same classroom and not separated in a special school. Following the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, that mandated all children with disabilities should be educated in regular school settings. However, there are challenges in inculcating children with ASD in to the regular classroom as the neuro-development disorder is characterized by social communication disorder and behaviour that range from mild to severe. Teachers will face multiple challenges due to needs of the students with ASD, their special characteristics, sensory disruptive behaviours, and the lack of resources and time needed to educate them in the inclusive classroom. Therefore, coping with this stressful situation, teacher will need to be equipped with appropriate attitude to surmount any barriers to successful inclusive practices.

Despite Nigerian government been signatory to several international agreements that support inclusive education (Nwosu et al., 2020). There is little or no provision for the effective implementation of the policies of inclusion of persons with disabilities, ASD inclusive. According to Oluremi (2015) children with ASD or any other disability can be rejected by teachers because they lack the requisite training, experiences and the confidence to handle them. Training and experience of the teachers have been noted as crucial in the implementation of inclusion of persons with ASD. Therefore, it is important to note that attitude doesn't come naturally, but is moulded and shaped from knowledge, training and experiences received.

Teacher attitude has been found to be highly successful in teaching students with special educational needs. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) states that teachers who hold positive and open attitude toward creating an enabling environment of inclusion for all students in the classroom, irrespective of differences or disabilities were found to have been more successful in implementing inclusive practices. Research by Pearce (2009) suggests that maintaining a positive attitude towards inclusive education was even more important than either knowledge or skills. This is in agreement with a review conducted by Boyle et al. (2011) who added that a positive attitude towards students with ASD was even more important than school resourcing as it was the teacher who had to implement the inclusive practice.

Teachers are the main determinants of inclusive education practice. The effectiveness of inclusion of students with ASD in the regular classroom is dependent largely on the quality of knowledge of the teacher. Regular teachers need to be receptive to and realize the principles and demands of inclusion (Gómez-Marí, et al., 2022, Oparaoriaku, 2020). Inclusive education requires more intense training experiences to prepare them for the accommodation of diverse learners. The more the professional training experiences they have obtained, the better their attitude to inclusive education (Ajuwon, 2012).

Experience has been considered as a paramount need for positive attitude of students with ASD in the classroom.

Teacher who are actively involved in teaching students with diverse disabilities, especially ASD, hold more positive attitude than those with little or no experience. Experience in this case; present itself as the best teacher. This implies that the attitude of teachers who are older in the teaching profession can moderate their attitude better than the new birds in the profession towards students with ASD. Ohanele (2017), opines that background knowledge of ASD resulting from experience strongly influence attitude.

The characteristics of the teachers in terms of their age, gender, training and teaching experience may interplay with the attitudinal disposition of a teacher in the classroom towards students with ASD. For instance, it is usually said that experience is the best teacher. This imply that the attitude of teachers who have stayed a considerably longer year in the teaching service can moderate their attitude better than new teachers toward the students with special educational needs or can the older teachers show better attitude than young teachers to the students. An investigation into the attitude of regular teachers towards the inclusion of students with ASD in the general classroom in Rivers State found that gender influence the attitude of the teachers in different ways. The female teacher tends to have more positive and favourably disposed towards inclusion than the male teachers. Some literature disagrees with this, stating that the male teacher shows more positive attitude than the female teachers. These are critical findings that literature is yet to resolve and hence the motivation for this study. According to Mbaekwe (2020) in the past, students with ASD rarely received their education in regular classrooms, they were likely taught in intervention centres or in special schools. But since the focus on *Education for all*, coupled with inclusive education, gained insight into the mind, it is important for regular classroom teachers to craft out an effective program for these students in general classrooms. This study is set to investigate the attitude of teachers toward students with ASD in Port Harcourt local government in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Education system has changed drastically over the last decades, as inclusion of persons with disabilities in regular classroom has become the educational goal of many countries, Nigeria inclusive. The policy of inclusion is intended to increase equity and quality of life of all students as outline in the Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action of 1994. The implementation of this policy of inclusion lays majorly on the shoulders of the regular teachers. As more students with ASD are allowed to receive instruction in the inclusive classroom, the regular education teacher is expected to accommodate and provide instructions for these students. Therefore, teachers' attitude is critical in ensuring the successful inclusion of students with ASD, as their acceptance level of inclusive education may affect their commitment to the process.

Interaction with teachers of students with ASD reflect that, many teachers do not believe or embrace the idea of inclusion of students with ASD. This result to gross neglect, misconception and ill treatment melted to students with ASD, causing concern for parents, concerned teachers and counsellors. Students with ASD are called names that have negative psychological impact on their personality as learners and human beings consequently, their learning. This result in frustrations, development of disruptive behaviour in class and school and eventual withdrawal from school. There are many factors that contribute to the attitude of teachers, among which includes lack of regular teachers' knowledge of autism and lack of training for inclusive education. If teachers possess a negative attitude toward inclusion of students with ASD, this will affect their education negatively and limit their educational performance. When this happens, the students with autism do not receive adequate support and education from their classroom teachers, reducing their potential and negatively impacting the educational system and the society at large. This attitude of the society and particularly of the regular teachers towards student with ASD is one of the major barriers towards effective development of special needs education in Nigeria. Thus, the problem of this study was conceptualised that; what is the teachers' attitude towards students with ASD relative to the teachers' age, gender, training and years of teaching experience in Port Harcourt local government in Rivers State. It is against the backdrop that this study is motivated to investigate teachers' attribute and attitude towards students with ASD in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to assess the attitudes of regular teachers toward students with ASD. Specifically, the study seeks:

1. To explore the influence of age on attitude of teachers towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government in Rivers State.
2. To find out the influence of trainings on teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions would be answered in the study

1. To what extent does teachers' age influence their attitude towards student with ASD?

2. How does teachers' training influence their attitude toward handling students with ASD?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses would be tested at 0.05 level of significance in the study:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the extent to which age influence teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the extent to which training (educational qualification) influence teachers' attitude toward student with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was Two Hundred and Forty-Two (242) regular teachers. The sample size for the study was 121 teachers from public secondary schools in Port-Harcourt local government area of Rivers State. This represents approximately 50% of the population. A multistage sampling procedure was used in drawing the sample. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: "Teacher Attitude toward Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder Scale" (TASASDS). The instrument was divided into two sections, A and B. Section A consists of demographic characteristics of respondents while Section B focused on the attitudes of regular teachers toward students with autism spectrum disorder. The TASASDS was structured in a Likert-4-point response scale ranging from; Strongly Agreed (4), Agree (3), Disagreed (2) And Strongly Disagree (1) respectively. The instrument was subjected to validation by 3 experts in Centre for children developmental and communication disorders (CCDCD) for scrutiny. The validated instrument was trial tested with 20 regular teachers in four schools in PHALGA of Rivers State. The researcher chose two schools in the local government areas to be sure of reducing random error of location. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha formula was used for the analysis of the responses. The reliability coefficients of 0.81 was obtained from the estimate. The researcher used a descriptive statistical tool for data analysis. The research questions were answered with mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis were tested using the Analysis of Variance and Independent T-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Distribution of the Respondent's Age

Table 1: Distribution of the Age of the Respondents

S/N	Age	Number of Respondents	%
1.	21-30 years	10	8.3
2.	31-40 years	73	60.3
3.	40 years – Above	38	31.4
	Total	121	100

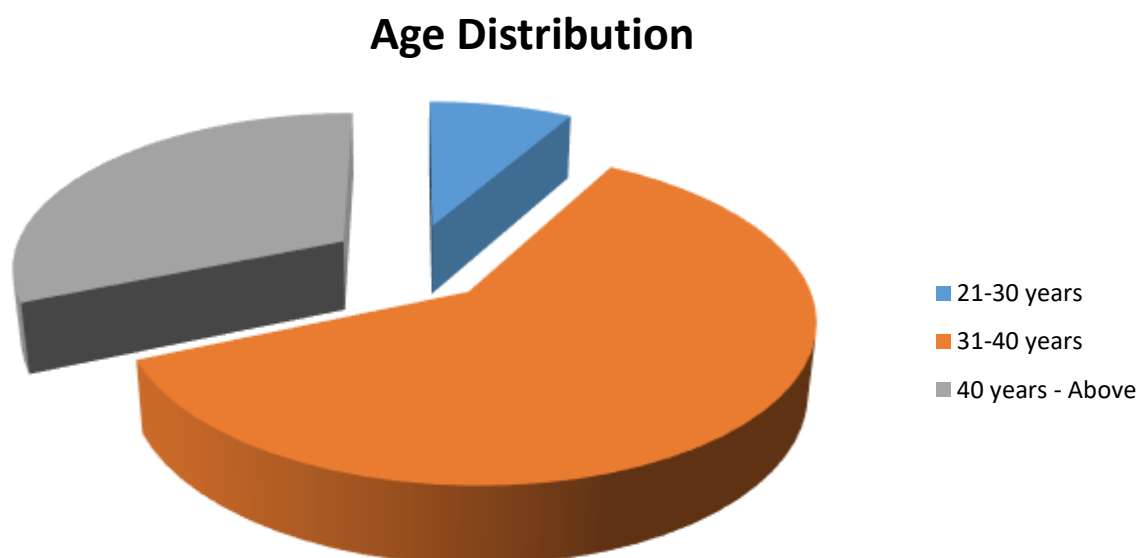


Figure 1: Chart of the age distribution of the respondents

The result of Table and Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents' age. The result indicates that the majority 73 (60.3%) of the respondents are aged 31-40 years, followed by 38(31.4%) who are aged 40 years - above, and 10(8.3%) are aged 21-30 years. The implication of the result is that majority of the respondents are aged 31-40 years.

Distribution of the Respondents' Educational Qualification

Table 2: Distribution of the Educational Qualification of the Respondents

S/N	Educational Qualification	Number of Respondents	%
1.	Educationist (NCE, B.Ed, M Ed, PhD)	78	64.5
2.	Non-Educationist (OND, HND, B.Sc, M Sc, PhD)	43	35.5
	Total	121	100

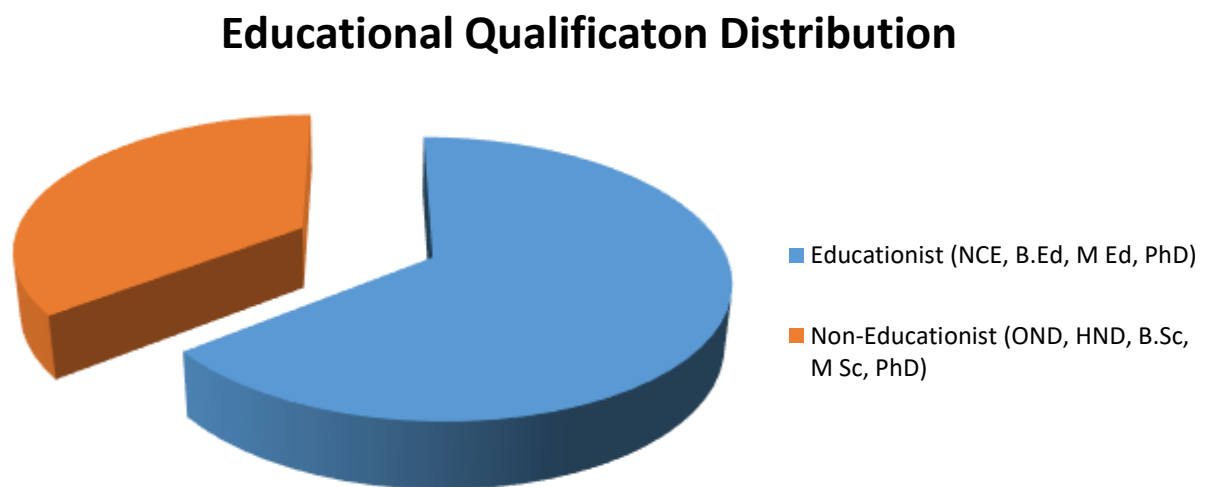


Figure 2: Chart of the cadre distribution of the respondents

The result of Table and Figure 2 shows the distribution of the respondents' training (educational qualification). The result indicates that the majority 78 (64.5%) of the respondents are educationist ((NCE, B.Ed, M Ed, PhD), followed by 43(35.5%) of the respondents who are Non-Educationist (OND, HND, B.Sc, M Sc, PhD). The implication of the result is that majority of the respondents are educationist.

Research Question One: To what extent does teachers' age influence their attitude towards student with ASD?

Table 1: Mean rating and standard deviation of the extent to which teachers' age influence their attitude towards students with ASD.

S/N	Items	21-30 years (n=10)		31-40 years (n=73)		40 years > (n=38)	
		\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
.1	Teaching students with ASD is stressful.	3.10	0.74	3.22	0.79	3.05	0.93
.2	Teachers will mind teaching students with ASD.	3.50	0.85	3.38	0.68	3.47	0.56
.3	Teachers cannot teach students with ASD successfully.	3.20	1.03	3.23	0.77	3.21	0.78
.4	No teacher enjoys teaching students with ASD.	3.10	0.88	3.15	0.88	3.24	0.79
.5	Teachers do not have morale for teaching students with ASD.	3.60	0.52	3.34	0.77	3.32	0.84
.6	Students with ASD cannot cope academically.	3.70	0.68	3.37	0.87	3.21	0.99
.7	Students with ASD should be taught only in special schools.	3.30	1.16	3.37	0.68	3.50	0.56
.8	Students with ASD need to be given special teachers.	3.20	0.79	3.12	0.85	3.03	0.89
.9	There is nothing wrong with having student with ASD in the general class setting.	1.00	0.00	1.38	0.49	1.53	0.51
.10	Teaching students with ASD with regular students will not be effective.	3.60	0.97	3.16	0.93	3.34	0.85
.11	Students with ASD can be seen among the bright students in the general class.	3.20	0.79	3.03	0.91	3.11	0.89
.12	Students with ASD can affect bright students adversely.	3.10	0.88	2.96	1.01	3.11	0.95
.13	It is a waste of time teaching bright students and those with ASD together as it is burdensome.	3.40	0.97	3.19	0.94	3.26	0.83
.14	Curriculum implementation is difficult in a class for bright and students with ASD.	3.10	0.88	3.08	0.92	3.11	0.95
.15	There is no motivation in teaching students with ASD.	3.40	0.84	3.15	0.94	3.13	0.84
.16	Equal opportunity cannot be given to a student with ASD in the regular classroom.	3.30	1.06	3.37	0.77	3.34	0.67
.17	Nothing is more frustrating like teaching students with ASD.	3.60	0.52	3.15	0.92	3.32	0.87
.18	It is better to be excused from teaching students with ASD.	3.00	0.94	3.10	0.93	3.05	0.96
.19	No matter how hard one tries little can only be achieved on a student with ASD.	3.40	0.52	3.15	0.86	3.21	0.81
.20	Giving extra time to students with disabilities is immaterial to their achievement .	1.70	0.95	2.19	1.14	3.18	0.87
.21	My knowledge of ASD children helps me in managing ASD students better.	3.40	0.52	3.30	0.81	3.13	0.91
Grand Mean		3.14		3.07		3.14	

Criterion Mean = 2.5, Mean: 1.0-2.49 = Disagreed, 2.5-4.00= Agreed.

Table 1 shows the extent to which teachers' age influence their attitude towards student with ASD. The result showed that the majority of the respondents aged 21-30 years agreed to 1-8, 10-19, and 21, with their mean scores greater than or equal to the criterion mean (2.50) The grand mean of 3.14 indicates that majority of the teachers aged 21-30 years agreed that age influence their attitude towards student with ASD to a high extent. The result also showed that the majority of the respondents aged 31-40 years agreed to 1-8, 10-19, and 21, with their mean

scores greater than or equal to the criterion mean (2.50) The grand mean of 3.07 indicates that majority of the teachers aged 31-40 years agreed that age influence their attitude towards student with ASD to a high extent. Lastly, result also showed that the majority of the respondents aged 40 years and above agreed to 1-8, 10-19, and 21, with their mean scores greater than or equal to the criterion mean (2.50) The grand mean of 3.14 indicates that majority of the teachers aged 40 years and above agreed that age influence their attitude towards student with ASD to a high extent. The implication of the result is that the perception of teachers aged 21-30 years, 31-40 years, and 40 years and above on the extent to which teachers' age influence their attitude towards student with ASD do not differ.

Research Question 2: How does teachers' training (educational qualification) influence their attitude toward handling students with ASD?

Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation of how teachers' training (educational qualification) influences their attitude toward handling students with ASD

S/N	Items	Educationist (n=78)			Non-Educationist (n=43)		
		\bar{x}	SD	Decision	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
.1	Teaching students with ASD is stressful.	3.22	0.77	Agree	3.05	0.93	Agree
.2	Teachers will mind teaching students with ASD.	3.40	0.69	Agree	3.47	0.59	Agree
.3	Teachers cannot teach students with ASD successfully.	3.22	0.80	Agree	3.23	0.78	Agree
.4	No teacher enjoys teaching students with ASD.	3.12	0.88	Agree	3.28	0.77	Agree
.5	Teachers do not have morale for teaching students with ASD.	3.37	0.76	Agree	3.33	0.81	Agree
.6	Students with ASD cannot cope academically.	3.42	0.86	Agree	3.21	0.97	Agree
.7	Students with ASD should be taught only in special schools.	3.36	0.74	Agree	3.49	0.59	Agree
.8	Students with ASD need to be given special teachers.	3.13	0.84	Agree	3.05	0.87	Agree
.9	There is nothing wrong with having student with ASD in the general class setting.	1.32	0.47	Disagree	1.53	0.51	Disagree
.10	Teaching students with ASD with regular students will not be effective.	3.23	0.97	Agree	3.30	0.80	Agree
.11	Students with ASD can be seen among the bright students in the general class.	3.04	0.90	Agree	3.12	0.88	Agree
.12	Students with ASD can affect bright students adversely.	2.99	1.00	Agree	3.07	0.94	Agree
.13	It is a waste of time teaching bright students and those with ASD together as it is burdensome.	3.21	0.96	Agree	3.28	0.80	Agree
.14	Curriculum implementation is difficult in a class for bright and students with ASD.	3.06	0.92	Agree	3.14	0.94	Agree
.15	There is no motivation in teaching students with ASD.	3.15	0.93	Agree	3.19	0.85	Agree
.16	Equal opportunity cannot be given to a student with ASD in the regular classroom.	3.36	0.82	Agree	3.35	0.65	Agree
.17	Nothing is more frustrating like teaching students with ASD.	3.19	0.91	Agree	3.33	0.84	Agree
.18	It is better to be excused from teaching students with ASD.	3.06	0.94	Agree	3.09	0.92	Agree
.19	No matter how hard one tries little can only be achieved on a student with ASD.	3.19	0.82	Agree	3.19	0.82	Agree
.20	Giving extra time to students with disabilities is immaterial to their achievement.	2.14	1.13	Disagree	3.05	0.98	Disagree
.21	My knowledge of ASD children helps me in managing ASD students better.	3.33	0.75	Agree	3.12	0.93	Agree
Grand Mean		3.07			3.14		

Criterion Mean = 2.5, Mean: 1.0-2.49 = Disagreed, 2.5-4.00= Agreed.

Table 2 shows the extent to which teachers' training (educational qualification) influence their attitude toward handling students with ASD. The result showed that the majority of the respondents who are educationist (NCE, B.Ed, M Ed, PhD), agreed to 1-8, 10-19, and 21, with their mean scores greater than or equal to the criterion mean (2.50) The grand mean of 3.07 indicates that majority of the teachers who are educationist (NCE, B.Ed, M Ed, PhD), agreed that training (educational qualification) influence their attitude toward handling students with ASD to a high extent. Lastly, the result showed that the majority of the respondents who are non-educationist (OND, HND, B.Ed, MEd, PhD), agreed to 1-8, 10-19, and 21, with their mean scores greater than or equal to the criterion mean (2.50) The grand mean of 3.14 indicates that majority of the teachers who are non-educationist (OND, HND, B.Ed, MSc, PhD), agreed that training (educational qualification) influence their attitude toward handling students with ASD to the high extent. The implication of the result is that the perception of educationist and non-educationist on the extent to which teachers' training (educational qualification) influence their attitude toward handling students with ASD do not differ.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the extent to which age influences teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State.

Table 3: Summary of ANOVA of difference in the extent to which age influences teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State.

ANOVA					
Sources	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	60.34	2	30.17	1.50	0.23
Within Groups	2379.62	118	20.17		
Total	2439.97	120			

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in the extent to which age influences teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State ($F_2, 118 = 1.50, P = 0.23 > 0.05$), hence null hypothesis one is retained at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the extent to which training (educational qualification) influences teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State.

Table 4: Summary of independent t-test on the difference in the extent to which training (educational qualification) influences teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State.

Training (Educational Qualification)	n	\bar{x}	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Sig.	Decision
Educationist	78	64.51	4.73	119	1.56	1.96	0.12	NS
Non- Educationist	43	65.84	3.99					

Table 4 indicates that $t_{cal} = 1.56$, $df = 119$, and $t_{tab} = 1.96$. Therefore, since $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$ and $P = 0.12 > 0.05$, then there is no significant difference in the extent to which training (educational qualification) influences teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State. Hence, the null hypothesis two is retained at the 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion

The study investigated the attitude of teachers towards students with autism spectrum disorders in Rivers State. From the data gathered and analysis carried out, the findings of research question one showed that the perception of teachers aged 21-30 years, 31-40 years, and 40 years and above on the extent to which teachers' age influence their attitude towards student with ASD do not differ. Furthermore, the result of hypothesis 1 showed that there is no significant difference in the extent to which age influences teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State. The finding is consistent with the findings of Gómez-Mari, et al. (2022) revealed inconclusive levels on teacher's attitude, some of the teachers reported positive attitude while some neutral and some negative. Also, Oparaoriaku (2020) revealed that most of the regular teachers in secondary schools in the study area have negative attitude towards students with learning disabilities. Also, the findings of research question two showed that the perception of educationist and non-educationist on the extent to which teachers' training (educational qualification) influence their attitude toward handling students with ASD do not

differ. Furthermore, the result of hypothesis 2 showed that there is no significant difference in the extent to which training (educational qualification) influences teachers' attitude towards students with ASD in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State. These findings are consistent with the findings of Osi & Osi (2022), showed that teacher's gender, experience and qualification have no significant effect on inclusion of students with learning disability.

Conclusion

This study investigated the attitude of teachers towards students with autism spectrum disorders in Rivers State. Based on the test conducted, the study concluded that age, training (educational qualification), years of experience, and gender did not significantly influence the attitude of teachers towards students with autism spectrum disorders in Rivers State. These findings suggest that teachers in regular schools in Rivers State have a generally negative attitude towards the inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorders into their classrooms. This means that students with autism spectrum disorders may face challenges in receiving appropriate support and accommodations in regular schools in Rivers State, hence need to be provided with specialized interventions and resources to ensure their educational success.

Recommendations

Considering the findings, discussion and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The River State government should implement mandatory training programmes for teachers in Port Harcourt Local Government, Rivers State, to improve their attitudes towards students with ASD.
2. The River State government should provide additional support and resources for teachers with less educational qualifications to ensure they are equipped to effectively teach and support students with ASD.

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