

Problems of Adolescents in Inclusive Secondary Schools: A Comparative Analysis

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Background

In a previous study, on students with disabilities the writer found that majority of the respondents have different problems, which was attributed to the presence of disability, the physical environment of the school as well as the services that were provided.

However, considering the peculiar situation of a child in contemporary Nigerian society coupled with the students being adolescents, one is tempted to compare the problems of students with disabilities and those without disabilities to ascertain if there are significant differences.

Though, Kling, Hyde, Showers, and Bruswell, (1999) posited that comparing the life experiences of people with disabilities with those of non-disabled peers may be meaningless since the life experiences of the two groups are different by virtue of the presence of disability but inclusive education is meant to cater for the differences.

Inclusive education in this paper is the education of all students classified as disabled together with non-disabled in general classrooms with appropriate professional services, what Bove (2005) termed *full inclusion*.

The goal of inclusive education is to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming communities, build an inclusive society and achieve equal educational opportunities for all. The efficacy of inclusive education in changing non-disabled attitudes towards the disabled has been asserted by several studies.

In addition, a child in contemporary Nigeria is faced with the challenges of poverty and its attendant problems.

The former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Prof. Chukwuma Soludo declares 54% of Nigerians, which is about 76 million of Nigeria's 140 million people, as living below poverty level (Egwa, 2008).

It has been asserted that poverty destroys aspirations, hope, and happiness. Poverty affects tolerance of others, self-esteem and sense of personal competence (Schiller, 2000; Harrison 2000).

Records have shown that poverty in Nigeria has pushed many into different vices such as human trafficking, prostitution, street trading, begging, child labour, corruption, disruption of family relations and social life (Anyagafu and Iwenjora, 2006).

Poverty is also closely linked with disability and impairment. According to Albert, McBride and Seddon (2002) poverty is a main cause of impairment, and vice-versa. Poor people are much more likely to suffer accidents, to live in unhealthy conditions, to have no access to clean water, to eat a bad diet, and to suffer from under nourishment.

Some Nigerian Kids say:

I have lived under the bridges for a long time, I have been a bus conductor and sometimes, my friends and I stay at the bus-stops to carry loads. There are some lorries that bring in big loads from the North to Lagos. We do the off-loading and at the close of the day, they pay us and I go to where I usually sleep. Sometimes, we sleep inside the vehicles which are no longer in good condition and use them as our house”.

“My family is extremely poor. I pay my school fees from the returns I get from what I do. My family members do not even know what I do. I am the one training myself. I am in SSS III, (grade nine) our School Certificate Examination is coming soon and I need more money to register for the exam. I would work extra hard to make the amount”.

Besides the pangs of poverty is the adolescence factor. According to Hall, adolescence is a time of rebellion, crises, pathology and deviance. The conflicts and distress of the adolescent is attributed to biological changes. Contemporary psychologists such as Santrock (2003) however, describes adolescence as a time of evaluation, decision making, commitment and a time of carving out a place in the world.

Hetherington & Kelly, (2002) asserts that adolescents who feel warmth and support from their parents and the environment are less likely to engage in risky behaviours

Unfortunately, today's adolescents are confronted with unstable environment of high rate of divorce, access to firearms, poverty and its attendant effects, strange fragments of violence, drug abuse and orgiastic sex from the media. Consequently, several behavioural problems such as school problems, future problems, drugs and alcohol abuse, mental health problems, teenage pregnancy and abortion, juvenile delinquency, depression and suicide manifest in today's adolescents.

The Problem

Adolescence is associated with various problems. However, contemporary psychologists such as Santrock (2003) assert that favourable environment is a major factor for adolescents to develop without problems.

Unfortunately, a child in contemporary Nigeria society as depicted above is in an unfavourable environment, which suggests the development of adolescents with several problems.

In a previous study by this writer, it was found that adolescents with disabilities had several problems despite being in an inclusive school, which should have facilitated a sense of belonging.

The implication is that other factors such as the ones depicted above are at play, hence the assumption that there would be no significant difference in the problems of adolescents either with or without disabilities.

The Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the problems of adolescents with and without disabilities in inclusive secondary schools in Lagos State and as well identify if there are differences

Research Question and Hypothesis

- What are the problems of adolescents in inclusive secondary schools in Lagos State?
- There would be no statistically significant difference in the problems of disabled and non-disabled adolescents in inclusive secondary schools in Lagos State.

Methods

- *Participant and Setting*

The sample selected for this study consists of 188 students 92 girls and 96 boys from seven inclusive secondary schools in Lagos State. All the 94 disabled students in the seven inclusive schools and 94 non-disabled students who were randomly selected from the schools formed sample for the study.

- *Instrument*

The instrument used for the study is the Student Problem Inventory (SPI), which is a self-report inventory through which individuals' describe their personal problems according to their perception. A test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.64 was established on the inventory.

Respondents were asked to place a tick on the space provided in front of each item on the inventory, as it relates to them.

- A total raw score above 60 indicates high or many problems
- 31-59 indicate average or medium problems
- 10 - 30 indicate low or few problems.

The fewer the numbers of ticks the lesser the individual's problem and the more the numbers of ticks the more the individual's problem.

- *Method of data Analysis*

Data was analysed with the use of SPSS for windows version 15.0-computer package. Descriptive statistics in form of frequency counts and percentage was used along with inferential statistics such as the t-Test. All analyses were held significant at 0.05.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of respondents into categories by their scores on SPI

		Levels of Problems					
Range		Low		Average		High	
Problem Areas	Disabled	Non-disabled	Disabled	Non-disabled	Disabled	Non-disabled	Problem Areas
A	Physical	20 (21.3)	79(84.0)	22(23.4) 9 (9.6)	12 (12.8)	52 (55.3)	3(3.2)
B	Financial	12(12.8)	38(40.4)	34(36.2)	28(29.8)	48(51.1)	28(29.8)
C	Social	23(24.5)	74 (78.7)	30(31.9)	14(14.9)	41(43.6)	6 (6.4)
D	Sexual	20(21.3)	80 (85.1)	21(22.3)	10 (10.6)	53(56.4)	4 (4.3)
E	Social Psychological	17(18.1)	74 (78.7)	20(21.3)	11 (11.7)	57(60.6)	9 (9.6)
F	Personal Psychological	19(20.2)	76 (80.9)	16(17.0)	14 (14.9)	59(62.8)	4 (4.3)
G	Religious	25(26.6)	72 (76.6)	15(16.0)	15 (16.0)	54(57.4)	7 (7.4)
H	Family	22(23.4)	42 (44.7)	18(19.1)	22 (23.4)	54(57.4)	30 (31.9)
I	Future	20(21.3)	81 (86.2)	13(13.8)	6 (6.4)	61(64.9)	7 (7.4)
J	Academic	20(21.3)	60 (63.8)	16(17.0)	15 (16.0)	58(61.7)	19 (20.2)
K	School Adjustment	10(10.6)	70 (74.5)	20(21.3)	18 (19.1)	64(68.1)	6 (6.4)
	Total	208(20.1)	748(72.3)	225(21.8)	162(15.7)	601(58.1)	124(12.0)

Table 2: Test of difference between disable and non-disable students

Levels of Problems	Mean	Mean Difference	t	df.	Sig.	
Low	Non-disable	7.9574	5.74468	10.411	93	.000
	Disable	2.2128				
Average	Non-disable	1.4043	.98936	2.464	93	.016
	Disable	2.3936				
High	Non-disable	1.6383	4.75532	8.312	93	.000
	Disable	6.3936				

Discussion

Results presented in Table 1 show that students with disabilities have many problems with majority scoring high 43.6% - 68.1% on the high problem level, while students without disability scored high 40.4% - 86.2% on the low problems level

Results presented in Table 2 show a statistically significant difference between the problems of disabled and non-disabled students on all levels of problems. With low problems level $t, 10.411 = p, 0.000 < 0.05$, average problems level $t, 2.464 = p, 0.016 < 0.05$, and high problems level $t, 8.312 = p, 0.000 < 0.05$ the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between disabled and non-disabled students is therefore rejected.

Contrary to the expectation that there would be no significant difference in the problems of adolescents with and without disabilities, results show a statistically significant difference in the problems of adolescents with disabilities and those without disabilities. Results also revealed that adolescents with disabilities in this study have many problems in all areas of problems measured, while non-disabled respondents scored lower on all areas of problems.

However, non-disabled adolescents scored relatively higher on financial, family and academic problems areas. The percentage scores of the non-disabled on other areas is not more than approximately 10% however on financial, family and academic problems areas, the percentage scores increased significantly to 29.8%, 31.7% and 20.2% respectively

The significant difference in problems of both groups and scoring high marks on all problems area for persons with disabilities is a pointer to the effect of disability, poverty and inappropriate practices of inclusive education. Disabling condition is an important cause of poverty and social exclusion, which can foster financial dependency on the state and the extended family.

Albert, McBride and Seddon (2002) already note that poverty is a main cause of impairment, and vice-versa. Poor people are much more likely to suffer accidents, to live in unhealthy conditions, to have no access to clean water, to eat a bad diet, and to suffer from under nourishment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations had constantly been echoed and re-echoed in several journal articles (Sulaiman, 2004; 2006a; 2006b & 2009) and is repeated here with the hope that it could get to the tables or hands of the government, educational administrators, policy makers/planners and all concerned to ensure the following:

- Proper adjustment of the school environment to suit the physical and psychological needs of students with disabilities.
- Provision of adequate technological equipments and support services needed to facilitate effective teaching, learning and overall growth of students with disabilities.
- Continuous and constant evaluation of inclusive education in schools.
- Mandatory laws and policies to enhance commitment and reduce neglect of the exceptional students.
- Ensure the presence of counsellors in all schools. The counsellor has important role to play in ensuring proper adjustment of the disabled and non-disabled alike. Just as the disabled students need orientation about the school environment so also do the non-disabled students, as well as the teachers and support staffs need information and understanding of disabled students to relate with them appropriately.