
**EFFECTS OF PARENTS` STATUS ON THE
EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN BAUCHI, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study examined the effects of parents` family status on the education of children with special educational needs in public primary schools in Bauchi, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey design and employed questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The study targeted all parents of children with disabilities in the study area. Purposive sampling was used to sample 100 parents of children with disability to participate in the study. The validity and reliability of the instruments was ascertained by experts who were privy to the research. Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula for test-retest was used to compute the correlation coefficient in order to establish whether the content of the questionnaire was consistent in eliciting the same responses every time the instrument is administered. A correlation coefficient of 0.84 was obtained and considered high enough to judge the reliability of the instrument. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to generate frequency tables and Percentages to describe and summarize the data. The findings of the study revealed that, half of the parents that participated in the study have 7-10 children in their house hold, 7 parents have 11 and above children, 13 parents have 4-6 children while 19 parents have 1-3 children in their household. The study recommended that, Special Committee at the community level to be set up in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities to ensure the education

of children with disabilities in general education schools. Parents of children with disabilities should be involved in all matters related to education of their children in regular schools. Enlightenment campaigns should be carried out by the mass media stressing the importance of education of children with disabilities in general education schools.

Keywords: Parents, Children, Special Educational Needs, Public Primary Schools

Background to the Study

Education is a fundamental human right. It is an essential tool that facilitates the improvement in the quality of life and social and human development. All persons, and especially those that are the most disadvantaged and excluded in the society, should be guaranteed access to basic education. Equally important is the right of children with disabilities to be protected from discrimination and stigmatization as stated in Article 2 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Children which establishes that a child shall not be discriminated against irrespective of race, colour, sex, language, religion, disability, birth or status (UNCRC, 1989). This affirmation is further emphasized by the Children's Act (2001) which enshrines a child's right to live with his/her family and rights to education and integration in law.

All children including those living with disability are entitled to education. In practice however, millions of children with disabilities, throughout the world are still being denied their fundamental right to quality education. Although exact figures are difficult to verify, UNESCO estimates that out of the 72 million children of primary school age who are out of

school, one- third are children with disabilities, and that more than 90% of children with disabilities in the world's poorest countries do not go to school at all (UNESCO, 2008). The education of children with disabilities globally witnessed a shift from the segregated to integrated system of education which is now moving to an inclusive model. Because of a growing consensus worldwide that all children have the right to be educated together in a regular school system regardless of any differences, the inclusive education model emphasizes the rights of children with disabilities to participate fully in school life, and the institutions duty to welcome and embrace them as part of the school. Over the past three decades, schools have experienced a shift towards inclusivity in education and a substantial increase in the number of children with disabilities being enrolled in general education classrooms (US Department of Education, 2001).

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, there have been other important human rights declarations with specific bearing to inclusive education. Among these, is the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which categorically states that all children, including those with disabilities, have the right to receive an education without discrimination on any ground. Inclusive education was endorsed internationally in the Salamanca Statement of 1994 which reflects the United Nation`s Global Strategy of Education for All (EFA). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education pointed out the rights of all children,

including those with disabilities, to access education in a regular school setting and the responsibility of the school system to accommodate them. It further supports the Human Rights Declaration maintaining that inclusion of children with disabilities and their participation in regular schools is essential to human dignity and the enjoyment and exercises of human rights. All these declarations and statements give international authority to the issue of inclusion as one of human rights (Kearney, 2009). It is, therefore, a globally accepted fundamental responsibility of every nation to provide education to all her citizens regardless of ability.

Inclusive education is regarded as the most relevant approach to address the educational needs of all children (Balami, 2013). This approach says that children with disabilities must attend a general education school programme and be enrolled in age-appropriate classes for 100% of their school life (Idol 2006). Inclusive education is a process intended to respond to children's diversity by increasing their participation and reducing exclusion within and outside education. It is related to attendance, participation, and achievement of all children and especially those who for different reasons are excluded or at risk of being marginalized (UNESCO, 2005). Kamere (2004) regards inclusive education as the practice in which the school system is organized in such a way that it accommodates and educates all its students, both with and without disabilities. The system provides that children will not be removed from general education classrooms unless

they absolutely cannot be educated successfully even after the school has provided all requisite support services and resources. Inclusive education represents a philosophical shift in the practice of education which requires the restructuring of schools to eliminate the separation of regular and special education and to accommodate the needs of the students (Edmunds, 2000). Lere (2012) states that inclusive education is a system that is gaining global attention and has been described as a social movement against school exclusion. The practice focuses on the restructuring of regular schools to respond to the diverse needs of both special needs and able-bodied pupils.

The inclusion of children with special educational needs in general education schools has been an area of serious concern and a subject of discussion among scholars. Several studies have revealed that the inclusion of children with special education needs in general education has been endorsed despite some challenges affecting its full implementation. For instance, in the United States of America, the Individual with Disability Education Act (1989) provided that children with disabilities must be provided with free basic public school education. In its first year, IDEA enrolled 3.7 million students or 8% of the total school enrolment (US Department of Education, 2000). The number of IDEA enrollees reached 6.6 million students or 14% of the total school enrolment in 2003-2004 (USDE 2006). Despite this tremendous achievement, inclusion of children with special needs in the USA is still faced with the dual problems of teacher training and limited school support

as barriers to teacher's ability to accommodate children with special needs in inclusive settings (Barbara; Michael and William 1998). The British government has provided guidelines for the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools ensuring that learners with disabilities are guaranteed education in regular public schools. The government provided that every local education authority has the responsibility to ensure that sufficient funds are provided to every school to support the learning of children with disabilities (Mutembei, 2014).

The status of inclusive education in most developing countries remains in the realm of theory and far from practice; it is still grappling with the problems of policy implementation, unfriendly learning environment, lack of professional teachers in the area of special needs education, inadequate teaching resources, and lack of stakeholders' involvement and the use of rigid curriculum (Amalemba, 2013). According to the World Bank Report (2018), there are between 93 and 150 million children with disabilities in the world under the age of 14. In Africa, about 6.4% of children in this age range have moderate or severe disabilities and less than 10% of all children with disabilities under the age of 14 are attending school. Today, an estimated 65 million primary and secondary schools age children in Africa have disabilities and close to half of them are out of school (World Bank, 2018).

Chukuka (2013) contends that the quest for education for children with disabilities in Nigeria started in the early 1970s when the Federal Government determined that public

schools would prepare all children to be independent and productive citizens within their communities. This decision marked the beginning of the push to equalise educational opportunities for all children as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004, revised) which requires that all children be given equal education irrespective of differences. Nigeria had joined other world nations in what had become an international response to global declarations and legal framework about the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools. These declarations included the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the United Nations Disability Forum/framework for Action (2010), the six (6) goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the eight (8) goals of the Universal Basic Education Act (2004), the Child Rights Act (2002) and the United Nations Disability Convention (2005).

More importantly, Nigerian policy on education appreciated the concerns and different requirements related to the formal education of all potential groups of learners acknowledging their physical, social, and economic status. Nigeria had signed and ratified the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 24 of which provides that all schools must be inclusive and accessible to all children including those with disabilities. Nigeria has equally signed-up to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 4 of which targets that by 2030, all school-age children including those with disabilities must have access to qualitative, functional and effective basic education. The

Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 provides that basic education is free and compulsory for all school-age children. The Federal Government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Education provides policy guidelines for inclusive education targeting children with various disabilities (NPE, 2004). According to Ibrahim (2013), regular schools in Nigeria do not have adequate manpower to manage inclusive education.

Going by modern standards, about 42% of all regular schools were found to be unsuitable for special needs education (FMOE, sector analysis 2003). The design and management of primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are reportedly non-inclusive and inaccessible to children with disabilities. Despite efforts to make regular schools more responsive to all children, it has been reported that children with disabilities are still being excluded and marginalized from quality education worldwide, a fact that diminishes their chances and ability to attain their full potentials and enjoy rights to citizenship, gainful employment and given responsibilities in society (UNESCO, 2011). The World Bank report (2014) indicates that most developing nations have succeeded in achieving quantitative education goals. The report showed that about 50 million children in the world gained access to basic education and many are accomplishing completion. This is not typically the case of qualitative achievement in education. An estimated 250 million children are unable to read, write and do simple arithmetic even after spending more years in the school (World Bank, 2014). Every child has the indispensable right

to quality education—one that helps them acquire simple literacy and numeracy skills, enjoy learning without fear and feel valued and included, irrespective of where they come from (UNICEF, 2015). Poor quality education is almost equal to no education at all. There is little point in providing the opportunity for children to enrol in school if the education is one that will not help them to be literate or numerate (Setren and Gordon, 2017).

Objective of the study

The study was guided by the following objective:

- To examine the effects of parents` family status on the education of children with Disabilities in public primary schools

Methodology

This study used the survey research design to examine the effects of parents` family status on the education of children with Disabilities in public primary schools. Orodho (2006), affirm that this technique is used to explore various diverse aspects or characteristics of a human population such as opinions, attitudes, beliefs and/or knowledge of certain phenomenon. This study is, therefore, a survey as it seeks to assess the opinions of the respondents. Since this study employs questionnaires as its primary instrument of data collection, the assertion that it is a survey is further bolstered by Orodho (2006) who state that a survey is a method of collecting information by means of interview or the administration of questionnaires. The target populations of this study composed of all parents of children with disabilities in the seven sampled schools in Bauchi. 100

parents were purposely selected to participate in the study and only 78 returned the filled questionnaires. For simplicity and ease of eliciting feelings, disposition, experience, opinion of the subjects sampled in the study, questionnaires were administered to respondents to collect data. Orodho (2006) commends the suitability of questionnaire in data collection for being cheap to administer. It can also be used with a large number of respondents to validate the instrument which is bias-free and enables respondents to provide answers to their own pace. The instrument was subjected to expert judgments that then vet the items in terms of relevance to the subject matter, coverage of the content areas, appropriate language usage and clarity of purpose. The researcher then conducted a pilot study of ten parents who were not part of the study. Test-retest reliability was adopted to ensure the reliability of the instrument. In order to avoid influence of familiarity of the research instrument, an interval of two weeks was given before the administration of the retest. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Formula for test-retest was used to compute the correlation coefficient in order to establish whether the content of the questionnaire was consistent in eliciting the same responses every time the instrument is administered. A correlation coefficient of 0.84 was obtained and considered high enough to judge the reliability of the instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Table I: Showing number of children per household

Children per household	F	%
1-3	19	24.4%
4-6	13	16.7%
7-10	39	50.0%
11-above	7	8.9%
Total	78	100%

Table 1 above shows that 39 or 50% of parents have between seven and ten children, 19 parents (24.4%) have between one and three children, 13 parents or 16.7% have between four and six children, while 7 parents or 8.9% have eleven or more children. These findings show that a large majority or 50% of these parents have large families. This fact, coupled with low incomes points to the reason why parents cannot send all their children to school. Large households are expensive to sustain, a fact that is bound to constrain family resources and in many instances parents are forced to make difficult choices such as which children to send to school and which will remain at home. Moula (2010) reported that large family size tends to affect children`s progress in school. It further revealed that in large families where living quarters are cramped and overcrowded, children are inadvertently deprived of their right to education. This fact, coupled with low incomes points to the reason why parents cannot send all their children to school in Bauchi, Nigeria. The findings of

this study uphold the premise that the larger the family is, the lower the chances of all the children attending school. Generally, large family size, poverty, parents' low level of education, and financial background affect the education of children in school. In many African cultures having a child with a disability is considered an abomination, and such children are culturally relegated to the background and hidden. Moula (2010) opined that the size of a family affects the education of its children. Matrilineal accountability is unusual in Northern Nigerian culture, and the scenario narrated above is an unparalleled digression from custom brought about by need. This is a lucid demonstration of the pressure piled on the father which can only impact the family negatively.

Conclusion

This study concluded that due to the large numbers of children in many families, lack of sufficient earning coupled with low education background, many parents in the Bauchi state found it difficult to feed, let alone send their children to school. Under these circumstances, the only ones with a sliver of hope of getting an education are children without disabilities. Parents with large numbers of children find themselves in precarious situations such as literally being forced to make painful decisions regarding which of their children will attend school and which ones will remain at home. Sadly, the axe falls often on children with disabilities because, in the opinion of these parents, children with disabilities are less intelligent and cannot possibly gain much or succeed in school.

Recommendations

Special Committees at the community`s level should be set up in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities to ensure the education of children with special educational needs in general education schools. Parents of children with special educational needs should be involved in all matters related to education of their children in regular schools. Enlightenment campaigns should be carried out by the mass media stressing the importance of education of children with special educational needs in general education schools.

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