

Attitudes of Primary School Children with Hearing Impairment toward Visual Arts and School Refusal Tendencies in an Inclusive Education Setting in Calabar Education Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study was conceived to examine the relationship between attitudes of primary school pupils with hearing impairment toward the study of visual art and school refusal tendencies in Calabar Education Zone. To achieve the purpose of the research, two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Literature was reviewed according to the variables. The correlation research design was adopted to execute the study. This design was chosen because it sought to establish the relationship between attitudes of primary school pupils with hearing impairment toward the study of visual art and school refusal tendencies among school age children in Calabar Education Zone. The population consisted of primary school children with hearing impairment. A sample size of One Hundred and Forty (140) pupils was randomly drawn from twenty inclusive education primary schools in the zone. A four point Likert-like questionnaire scale was used by the teachers to rate the pupils in order to extract information from the subjects under study. The instruments were validated by experts in research and special education. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established through test re-test split half method and the reliability index was found to be high. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to analyze the data collected. The result of the analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between pupils' interest and classroom participation in visual art and school refusal tendencies among school age children

with hearing impairment. Based on the result obtained, conclusion was drawn and recommendations made.

Keywords: School refusal tendencies, visual arts, pupils with hearing impairments, inclusive education setting.

1. Introduction

Children (both with intact hearing and those without), at first instance of being introduced to school, most times express repulsive attitude towards schooling. This attitude in the academic parlance is referred to as school refusal syndrome. School refusal is one of the continuums of school attendance problems that render a consequential damage on the academic prowess of victims in the later years (Enyia 2016). It is an indication of severe emotional distress and anxiety at the process of schooling. Children who exhibit this attitude prefer to remain at home with their parents, and this prevents them from developing required independent skills and mental capacity for optimal functioning in the later years in life (Ashi, 2017).

According to Kearney (2007) in Olayi, (2016), school refusal should be distinguished from truancy as a different type of school attendance problem. Regular school attendance is an important part of giving pupils the best possible start in life; it makes teaching and learning more

easily accessible for both teachers and pupils with hearing impairment in the inclusive education setting.

School refusal is a complex problem that has been found to have multiple causes and is being maintained by many factors across the child's ecology. Thambirajah (2008) in Ewa & Olayi (2013) observes that the onset of school refusal can occur gradually either with no obvious etiology or as a result of a/some specific trigger(s).

The onset of school refusal includes illness, problematic family dynamics, incessant transfers of parents from one location to the other, traumatic experiences, as well as school related factors (Kearney and Bates 2008 in Enyia 2016). Other factors associated with school refusal include personality characteristics, such as introversion, withdrawal from peers, temperament, low self-confidence and behavioral inhibition (Enyia, 2016). The factors listed above can cause pupils to refuse school from early age.

From Thambirajah's perspectives as cited by Ewa & Olayi (2013), family factors include dysfunctional family interactions (example, over dependency, conflict, detachment and isolation of family members) and poor communication. Children from such family can easily refuse school because they cannot get what they want as children in their family, so going to school is totally out of point.

However, there is mounting evidence that experiences in the art can remediate school refusal syndrome in children with hearing impairment as most of their study and communication is visually oriented based. Experiences in visual arts have been discovered to play an important role in correcting many personality deficiencies, such as attention deficit, withdrawal, including school refusal syndrome. Sensory experience that stirs up the desire to grow and develop intellectually, socially, personally, and emotionally which is lacking in children with school refusal syndrome can be acquired through engagement in arts activities.

Art is an umbrella term for all creativity- driven activities. Visual art simply means an expression or application of what is beautiful in a manner that stimulates human aesthetic sensibility. This is believed to give children with hearing impairment the reason to pay attention to what so ever they are learning, as it captures their attention and as well prepare their minds set. Indeed, visual art forms such as ceramics, drawing, painting sculpture, design, video, animation and architecture facilitate learning of concepts in the most concretized manner (Agba 2016).

Accordingly Olayi citing Wikinson (2008) posits that experiences in the arts offer many intrinsic and extrinsic benefits to elementary children with hearing impairment. "Intrinsic benefits include, opportunities to develop creativity and imaginations which help to create joy, beauty and experience wonder in beholding any work of Art. Visual arts also present occasions that enrich the quality of our lives and to develop effective ways of expressing thoughts, knowledge, and feelings". Engagement in visual art activities also offer the evidence of extrinsic benefits of learning in, about and through the arts. These benefits contribute to increased engagement in learning other subject areas, and development of pupils' with hearing impairment self-confidence, social skills and mental cognition.

Ikebudo (2017) upholds that the intrinsic value of visual art can stimulates or facilitates other auxiliary benefits. Varied experiences in the arts develop self-confidence. For example, visual arts learning in school can foster co-operation, focused behavior, problem solving skills, and the development of fair-minded citizens and therapeutic measures in children with hearing impairment (Ewa and Olayi, 2013). Thus Enyia citing Ogden (2008) confirmed similar positive outcomes for adults who took part in musical theater during their elementary schooling. These benefits of visual arts education are now being identified by teachers and other stakeholders in inclusive education setting as more important than potential benefits to be achieved in the study of other subject areas.

Informal visual art learning has been discovered to be particularly viable in preparing pupils/students who are hearing impaired but with school refusal tendencies for formal schooling. Vellucci, (2009) in Enyia (2016), posits that community arts helps the pupils or prepare them when given opportunity of formal arts learning. Such programs include dance instruction in hip-hop ballet, jazz, and tap. Thus Ogden (2008) in Enyia (2016), noted that informal learning in art refers to knowledge gained by participants through their contact with other peers and experts, through experiences in art making activities, through ongoing experimentation in the arts, and in the absence of a recognized or formal curriculum or instructor.

The idea of informal art practice for children with hearing impairment is based on the assumption that when such pupils get in contact with other peers in their informal setting, they become interested in learning when eventually they are provided with an opportunity. It will motivate them to learn more at this state. Bringing such children to school is very easy and the rate of school refusal tendencies will be reduced. Music skills may be learned informally and primarily by making music with peers and as well as by listening to recordings.

Ogden further noted that pupils who engage in art-making outside the context of formal schooling or private instruction often adopt strategies for learning that are vastly different from the strategies associated with typical school learning. Pupils who engaged in this art-making can easily conceive new ideas on their own, and they can learn without any instructor. From the foregoing, two cogent points are apparent. First is that, there is a compelling reason to nurture art education in the elementary years. Secondly, it is also clear that art can become the most viable approach to introducing schooling in the most acceptable manner especially as the learning of pupils with hearing impairment is strategically visual oriented.

Green (2004) maintains that the four approaches for cultivating a wide number of strategies for embedding arts education in the fabric of

children with hearing impairment daily lives include:

- Children with hearing impairment differ from one another and consequently, often learn in profoundly different ways, even within the arts. This implies that different approaches should be introduced in the teaching of art in order to reduce school refusal tendencies in children with hearing impairment and foster better understanding among them.
- Cultural and regional characteristics require flexibility in approaches to teaching and learning in order to maximize opportunities for children with special needs to thrive in their communities.
- When teacher brings to bear differing areas of strengths and expertise to the teaching of arts, it helps the teacher to know the pupils strengths and areas of expertise in order to capture their minds for effective implementation of art learning in inclusive education setting.
- Art education must include learning in about and through the arts, and these different approaches to the arts require differing levels of resources and expertise.

With these four approaches, arts will have a high degree of influence on pupils learning, because it will assess the pupils both physically and intellectually. They can think of arts at any point in time and learn through it, as such even in the formal school settings they will be focused rather than refusing school.

Thus Green concludes that class teachers in inclusive education setting could and should adapt some of these practices such as learning by self-practices, working with peers and selecting repertoire based on pupils' choices. Thus he observed that ignoring the powerful personal inclinations that pupils attached to music and other art forms amounts to missing an opportunity to expand their arts literacy beyond the arts forms that are experienced deeply. Studies have been carried out to determine students' engagement in visual arts as factored

upon a number of indices. Mbai (2000), Iriwieri (2009 in Olayi 2016) and Agwobade (2015) among others have written on the dwindling participation of pupils in art activities at the primary level of education. Several factors were said to have caused this. Mbai decried the general lack of recognition of the importance of art to pupils in the school system. This he attributed to the absence of adequately trained teachers, lacks of appropriate materials to teach art and negative attitude towards the study of art in schools in Nigeria. In another perspective, Grant (2010) enumerated the benefits of art in school to include:

- Art helps the child to express and enjoy himself.
- Art helps the child acquires the skills to take care and preserve real and non real objects within their environment.
- Art helps the child to think divergently and decide to think for himself.
- Art helps to train the child in observation, hand and eye co-ordination.
- Art help the child to see and appreciates beautiful and well made things both in nature and manmade among others.

Thus Awogbade (2015), on the other hand, bemoaned the negative attitude put up by the Nigerian society towards the study of fine art, by regarding it as recreational subject. According to Mbai (2000) in Olayi (2016), most people in the Nigerian society, including the well-educated ones, perceived an artist as someone who paints and draws, and thus failing to understand that art is as valid as literature, politics or science as it particularly plays a fundamental role in children's cognitive developmental process. It is important to note that this misconception causes confusion and despair to pupils who in turn lose heart for visual art.

School refusal is the process by which a child refuses to attend school; it is an attitude or a behavior in children to stay away from school. Kahn and Nursten (1981) in Enyia (2016), posit that school refusal is a psychosocial problem for pupils with severe emotional distress and anxiety at the prospect of schooling. Thambirajah, Grandison and De-Hayes (2008) in Grant (2010) observed that the onset of school

refusal can occur gradually, either with no obvious etiology or as a result of a specific trigger. Therefore the onset of school refusal can emanate from illness, problematic family dynamics, traumatic experiences, and school related factors. The authors further attributed the causes and effects of school refusal to anxiety: this they pointed out that those pupils with school refusal tendencies often exhibit separation, social/performance or more generable anxiety reactions as well as other anxiety disorders tendencies.

Visual art provides pupils with non-academic benefits such as promoting self-esteem, motivation, aesthetic awareness, cultural exposure, creativity, improved emotional expression, as well as social harmony and appreciation of diversity. Capman (2008) in Agba (2017) also observed that the impact of visual art on learning that should be noted by every parent, teacher and administrator include:

- Pupils' engagement in visual art provides challenges to pupils at all levels where each pupil can find his/her own level from basic of mediocrity to being gifted.
- Pupils connect with each other better (this often results in lower dropout tendencies which promotes greater understanding of diversity and a wider range of peer support).
- Pupils learn to become sustained and self-directed learners (this implies the pupils do not just become outlets for the storage of facts from direct instruction, but seeks to extend instruction to higher levels of proficiency).

Olayi further opines that engagement in visual art positively impacts on the learning of pupils from lower socioeconomic status as much as possible more than those of a higher socioeconomic status. Perhaps the most fundamental element of education one should consider is the manner in which we perceive and make sense of the world in which we live. An effective education in the visual art helps to enhance what they see, what they look at, hear what they listen to, and feel what they touch.

Engagement in visual art helps pupils with hearing impairment to stretch their minds beyond the boundaries of the printed text or the rules of what is provable. The study of visual art frees their minds from rigid position of uncertainty.

It has been established that any education system which ignores or underestimates the importance of the child and his or her individuality, experiences, ideas and emotions will be inadequate, and that, as far as education values and emotion are concerned, amounts to indoctrination (Hall 2004 in Olayi 2016). The implication of this is that for any education system to be adequate, the complexities of school attendant problems and their implications for knowledge construction must be fathomed. Among such problems are: truancy, absenteeism, dropouts and school refusal tendencies among pupils with hearing impairment.

It therefore needs not be overemphasized that a curriculum that is rich in the arts would not only support the development of the intellectual, emotional, social skills, physical body, and spiritual wellbeing of the whole child. It will as well aimed at ameliorating the withdrawal, refusal syndrome and other social maladjustments common in children with special needs in general and those with hearing impairment in particular.

2. Statement of the problem

In spite of the widespread belief, as deduced from the foregoing, that the idea of placing the child at the center of education is never new phenomenon, there is a record of alarming degree of school attendance problems particularly between ages 7-12 years old that is traceable to environmental, social, psychiatric or other conditions in humanity. It becomes important therefore to trace the link between attitude towards visual art and school refusal tendency in children with hearing impairment, and finding out how fine art can be harnessed to ameliorate school refusal tendencies among primary school pupils with hearing impairment in Calabar education zone in Cross River State of Nigeria.

3. Purpose of the study

The general aim of this study is to find out pupils with hearing impairment attitude towards Visual Art and school refusal tendencies in inclusive education setting in Calabar education zone of Cross River State with a view to proffering lasting solutions to such a menace. Specifically, this study is aimed at finding out whether:

- There is any relationship between pupils with hearing impairment interest in visual arts and their school refusal tendencies.
- There is any relationship between pupils with hearing impairment classroom visual art participation and their refusal tendencies

4. Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to articulate the discourse:

- Is there any significant relationship between pupils with hearing impairment interest in visual arts and their school refusal tendencies?
- Is there any significant relationship between pupils with impaired hearing classroom art participation and their school refusal tendencies?

5. Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- There is no significant relationship between pupils with hearing impairment interest in visual arts and their school refusal tendencies
- Pupils' with hearing impairment classroom engagement in visual arts has no significant relationship with their school refusal tendencies?

6. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to the state ministry of education, teachers and

pupils/students with hearing impairment, researchers, parents and any other stakeholder in the inclusive education practices.

7. Methodology

The researcher adopted the correlation research design to execute the study. This design was chosen because it sought to establish the relationship between attitudes of primary school pupils with hearing impairment toward the study of visual art and school refusal tendencies among school age children in the education zone under study. The population consisted of primary school children with hearing impairment. A sample size of One Hundred and Forty (140) pupils was randomly drawn from twenty (Government and private) inclusive education primary schools in the zone under study. A four point Likert-like questionnaire scale was used by the teachers to rate the pupils in order to extract information from the subjects under study. The instruments were subjected to both content and face validity by experts in research and special education. The reliability

estimate of the instrument was established through test re-test split half method and the reliability index was found to be high. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to analyze the data collected. Each hypothesis is re-stated, and the result of data analysis carried out to test it is presented. Each hypothesis of the study was tested at .05 level of significance

8. Data Analysis and Presentation

8.1 Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between pupils with hearing impairment interest in visual arts and school refusal tendencies. The independent variable in this hypothesis is pupils' interest in visual arts; while the dependent variable is pupils' school refusal tendencies. To test this hypothesis, Interest in visual arts and pupils' school refusal tendencies was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between Interest in visual arts and Pupils' school refusal tendencies (N=140)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-value
Interest in visual arts	21.93	1.12	0.43*
Pupils' school refusal tendencies	21.23	1.85	

* Significant at .05, critical $r = .195$, $df = 138$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.43 is higher than the critical r-value of .195 at .05 level of significance with 138 degree of freedom. With the result of this analysis, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between interest in visual arts and pupils' school refusal tendencies was rejected. This result implies that, interest in visual arts has a significant positive relationship with pupils' school refusal tendencies.

8.2 Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between pupils with hearing impairment classroom art participation and school refusal tendencies. The independent variable in this hypothesis is classroom art participation; while the dependent variable is pupils' school refusal tendencies. To test this hypothesis, pupils' school refusal tendencies were correlated with their classroom art participation using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between classroom art participation and Pupils' school refusal tendencies (N=140)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value
Classroom art participation	21.07	1.89	0.87*
Pupils' school refusal tendencies	21.23	1.85	

* Significant at .05, critical $r = .195$, $df = 138$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.87 is higher than the critical r-value of .195 at .05 level of significance with 138 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between classroom art participation and pupils' school refusal tendencies was rejected. This result indicated that, classroom art participation has a significant positive relationship with pupils' school refusal tendencies.

9. Discussion of Results/Findings:

The result of hypothesis one is in agreement with the views of Wikinson (2008) in Olayi, (2016) who upholds that experiences in the arts offer many intrinsic and extrinsic benefits to elementary children with hearing impairment. "Intrinsic benefits include, opportunities to develop creativity and imaginations which help to create joy, beauty and experience wonder in beholding any work of Art, because arts also present occasions that enrich the quality of our lives and to develop effective ways of expressing thoughts, knowledge, and feelings".

The finding of hypothesis two is consonance with the work of Ogden (2008) in Enyia (2016) who observes that pupils who engage in art-making outside the context of formal schooling or private instruction often adopt strategies for learning that are vastly different from the strategies associated with typical school learning. Pupils who engaged in this art-making can easily form new things on their own, they can learn without any instructor.

10. Conclusion / Recommendations

10.1 Conclusion

Based on the results and findings of the study, the following conclusions were reached:

- Interest in visual arts significantly relate with pupils' school refusal tendencies
- Classroom art participation significantly relate with pupils' school refusal tendencies

10.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Classroom art participation should be made a compulsory subject at the basic level of education.
- Teachers should be encouraged to teach visual art with passion at the primary school level.
- Curriculum planners should make visual art as one the core subjects to be studied at all levels of education.

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