

Inclusive Education and the Girl child in Contemporary Nigerian Society: Counselling Implications

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Abstract. The study investigated inclusive education and the girl child in contemporary Nigerian society, counselling implications. Three research questions and hypotheses were raised as a guide to the study by using survey design. An instrument titled “Questionnaire for Inclusive Education and the Girl Child in Contemporary Nigerian Society (QIEGCCNS)” was designed and used to obtain appropriate results for this study. 100 female students from 20 public secondary schools in Jos metropolis were sampled using simple random sampling technique. The research questions were answered using simple percentages while t-test was using to test the hypotheses. The population of the study comprised of 1,200 respondents. The result showed that the inclusive education helps in increasing the girl child’s self-esteem and self-confidence if properly implemented. Also, it showed the differences in scores on factors militating against inclusive education in Nigeria. The study therefore made some recommendations, such as provision of adequate and effective use of technical equipment. Counselling strategies such as, modeling, cognitive restructuring, collaborative learning, transactional analysis and individualized counselling are found to be very useful in inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Girl Child, Contemporary Nigerian Society, Counselling.

1. Introduction

Education is generally seen as an experience acquired during one’s life time. This experience can either be in formal or informal way. Adeniyi (1992) in Fakayode and Osundina (2010) described education as an investment in man, that is, provision that determines the existence and continuity of man and his activities for as long as the universe remains. Based on this premise, an individual in the society, regardless of his other condition should be educated. Hence, the need for inclusive education and the girl child in contemporary Nigerian society.

In recent years, considerable interest has been generated worldwide on the effort to bridge the gap of educational inequality between the boy child and the girl child. Records have shown that the girl child is unnecessarily discriminated against in all works of life, including education. According to Bankole and Ebioyehi (2003), it has led to organizing different international conferences, such as the world summit for children, New York, 1990; world conference on education for all (EFA) 1990; the Pan-African conference on the education of girls, Ouagadougou 1993, among others. The major areas of these conferences were to eliminate all gender discriminations, improving access and quality of girl child education. Despite all these efforts, the girl child still faces discrimination, ranging from early marriage to access to quality education.

In Nigeria today, investigation affirms that a significant proportion of the girl child still lacks access to primary education either because they dropped out of the system or they were never enrolled in schools. Bankole and Ebioyehi (2003) opined that 46.6% of all pupils who withdrew from school are girls. Since education is a right of an individual the above group should be exposed to education system which will suit their respective purpose, hence the issue of inclusive education.

The issue of inclusive education started in June 1994 when representatives of 92 government and 25 internal organizations organized the world conference on special needs education (SNE) held in Salamanca, Spain. The conference agreed on a dynamic new statement on the education of all children with special needs. The conference adopted a new frame work for action with 14 guiding principles that the regular school accommodates the special needs child regardless of his or her ability. Thus Salamanca proclamation states that:

Those with special educational needs must have access to regular school, which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs. That the regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminating attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. (UNESCO 1995 p.g).

Girls with disabilities are among the world's most marginalized groups of society, resulting from social norms and cultural bias around gender and disability. Those agencies committed to gender equity in education overlook the specific situation of and added barriers faced by girls and women with disabilities, and those who are committed to disability inclusion and equity fail to apply a gender perspective. As a result, girls with disabilities have limited educational opportunities.

Dictionaries have defined inclusive education as a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, colour, gender, disability, sexual

preference, learning styles and language. Inclusive education means that all students attend and are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in ah-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. Inclusive education is therefore about how we develop and design our schools, classroom, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together. It happens when children with and without disabilities participate and learn together I the same classes. Research shows that when a child with disabilities attends classes alongside peers who do not have disabilities, good things, such as social interaction, development of self-confidence and esteem happen.

Aims and objectives of inclusive education as outlined by Okyere and Adams (2004) include:

- Education for all.
- Protection of rights.
- Identification of skills.
- Development of social consciousness.
- To prepare for new challenges.
- Development of brotherhood.
- Top improve quality of education.

The NPE (2004) sections B and C state that:

Education of children with special needs shall be free at all levels and all necessary facilities that would ensure easy access to education shall be provided e.g. inclusive education or integration of special classes and units into ordinary/ public classes and units into /public schools under the UBE.

From the above statement, it is clear that contemporary Nigerian society accepts this new approach to education for the special need children. This is also in line with the aim of inclusive education (Adeniyi and Egunjobi, 2003).

Challenges of inclusive quality education for a girl child in Nigeria as identified by UNICEF in Bankole and Ebioyehi (2003) and Isola and Osundina (2016) are:

- i. Traditional attitude towards the girl child.
- ii. Poverty and economic issue.
- iii. Early marriage and teenage pregnancy.
- iv. Culture and religious biases.

- v. Gender bias in content and teaching process.
- vi. Poor qualified teacher
- vii. Geographical isolation, and
- viii. Gender-based violence.

It should be realized that education is the bedrock of any human endeavor in the present life. The positive desire to [provide adequate and equal educational opportunities to the special needs individuals would go a long way to determining the nature of job, position in the work place, wages and shape their lives to the right direction.

Importance of inclusive education to the girl child includes building of self-esteem and confidence, development of friendship, acquisition of important academic skills, among others. The importance of inclusive education to the girl child cannot be over emphasized. For a girl child to be empowered to participate in decision making process when the need arises, she has to be given quality education. This paper therefore, seeks to elucidate that if obstacles that prevent a girl child from fundamental right to education are removed, she will have access to information related to her rights economically, health wise, socially, politically and in other ramifications. According to UNICEF (2007) in Isola and Osundina (2016) girl's education does not only bring the immediate benefits of empowering girls, but it is seen as the best investment in a country's development. Consequently, educating a girl child is fundamental for development, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, is to ring about political and economic development. It is against this background that this paper investigated inclusive education and the girl child in contemporary Nigerian society.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study determined the:

- Meaning of inclusive education.
- Causes of inclusive education.
- Benefits of inclusive education for the girl child
- Challenges of inclusive education for the girl child

3. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the causes of inclusive education for the girl child in contemporary Nigerian society?
- What are the benefits of inclusive education of the girl child?
- What are the challenges of inclusive education for the girl child?

4. Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

- There is no significant difference between the male and female students on the cause of inclusive education of the girl child in contemporary Nigerian society.
- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of males and females on the benefits of inclusive education of the girl child.
- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of males and females on the challenge of inclusive education for the girl child.

5. Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design in determining inclusive education and the girl child in contemporary Nigerian society. It was considered appropriate because it involved the use of questionnaire and it focused on the perception and description of the existing situation among a large number of respondents. The population of the study comprised of 1,200 respondents. 120 female and male students from 20 public secondary schools in Jos metropolis were sampled using simple random sampling technique. Three research questions and hypotheses were raised as a guide to the study. An instrument titled "Questionnaire for Inclusive Education and the Girl Child in Contemporary Nigerian Society (QIEGCCNS)" was designed and used to obtain appropriate results for this study. It was a 35-item instrument on a two-point scale of "Agree" and "Disagree" the questionnaire was validated by two experts

in special education and educational psychology. The instrument's reliability was also established. Data collected were analyzed using simple

percentages and t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

6. Findings

Research Question One: What are the causes of inclusive education for the girl child in contemporary Nigerian society?

Table 1: Percentage scores of Causes of Inclusive Education

S/N	Items	N	Male	Female	%
1	Combating discrimination attitudes	120	40	60	83.3%
2	Creating welcoming communities	120	35	60	79.1%
3	Building an inclusive society	120	45	55	83.3%
4	Achieving education for all	120	60	60	100%
5	It is a favoured approach to responding to the needs of special needs students in the ordinary schools	120	60	60	100%
6	To address gender disparity issues	120	35	60	79.1%
7	Increased access for underserved groups	120	50	60	91.7%
8	Increasing awareness for women education	120	38	60	81.7%
9	To avoid their separation from homes and families	120	60	60	100%
10	To be prepared early to adapt to the realities of life	120	60	60	100%

Table 1 show that the respondents, both males and females agreed that the causes of inclusive education for the girl child are achieving education for all, to avoid their separation from homes and families, and to be prepared early to adapt to the realities of life, all were rated 100%. Other highly rated item was increased access for underserved groups, 91.77%, while combating discriminatory attitudes and building an inclusive society were rated 83.3% respectively.

Research Question Two: What are the benefits of inclusive education for the girl child?

Table 2: Percentage Scores of Benefits of Inclusive Education.

S/N	Items	N	Male	Female	%
11	Academic achievement	120	45	59	86.7%
12	Increase in social interaction	120	38	60	81.7%
13	Maintenance of adequate self-esteem	120	50	57	89.1%
14	Building of self confidence	120	52	59	92.5%
15	Friendship develop	120	50	58	90-%
16	Deve3lopment of individual strengths	120	35	55	75%
17	Acceptance of individual differences	120	55	59	95%
18	Enhanced skill acquisition	120	48	56	80%
19	Increased social initiations	120	57	60	97.5%
20	Increased parent participation	120	54	58	93.3%
21	Important academic skills are learnt	120	58	60	98.3%
22	Appreciation of diversity	120	36	56	76.7%
23	Families are more integrated into community	120	51	58	90.8%
24	Learning of behavioral skill	120	48	57	87.5%
25	Families visions of a typical life for their children can come true	120	52	56	90%

Table 2 indicates respondents' percentage scores on benefits of inclusive education to the girl child. 98.3% of the respondents agreed to learning of important academic skills. This was closely followed by increased social initiations with 97.5%. Acceptance of individual differences had 95%; increased parent participation, 93.3%, and building of self-confidence, 92.5%. While others, such as families' integration into community, 90.8%; friendship develop; and families' visions of a typical life for their children can come true, had 90% each.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges of inclusive education for the girl child?

Table 3: Percentage Scores of Males and Females on Challenges of Inclusive Education for the Girl Child.

S/N	Items	N	Male	Female	%
26	Traditional attitude towards the girl child	120	32	58	75%
27	Poverty (i.e. economic issue)	120	48	60	90%
28	Early marriage	120	55	60	95.8%
29	Teenage pregnancy	120	45	56	84.1%
30	Culture biases	120	43	59	85%
31	Religious issues	120	35	60	79.1%
32	Gender disparity	120	58	60	98.3%
33	Geographical location	120	50	58	90%
34	Gender-based violence	120	52	60	93.3%
35	Child labour	120	50	60	91.7%

Table 3 reveals that the respondents agreed with all the items as challenges of inclusive education for the girl child. The highest rated item was gender disparity, 98.3%. early marriage, 95.8%; gender-based violence, 93.3%; and child labour, 91.7%. While poverty and geographical location were rated respectively.

Table 4: t-test analysis showing responses among the male and female students on the causes of inclusive education of the girl child in contemporary Nigerian society.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-cal	T-crit
Male	60	50.21	4.11	118	2.01	1.96
Female	60	53.72	7.53			

Table 4 shows a calculated t-value of 2.01 and a critical t-value of 1.96. Since the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value, the hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means there is a significant difference in the responses among male and female students on the causes of inclusive education of the girl child.

Table 5: t-test on the Difference between Male and Female Students on the Benefits of Inclusive Education of the Girl Child.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-cal	T-crit
Male	60	38.4	2.76	118	2.55	1.96
Female	60	48.2	6.64			

Table 5 reveals that there is significant difference between the responses of male and female on the benefits of inclusive education of the girl child, because the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical. Hence the null hypothesis is hereby rejected.

Table 6: t-test statistics on the difference between responses of Male and Female on the Challenges of Inclusive Education for the Girl Child.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-cal	T-crit
Male	60	50.1	4.9	118	2.00	1.96
Female	60	58.6	8.2			

Table 6 indicates the difference between male and female responses on the challenges of inclusive education of the girl child. The t-calculated of 2.00 is greater than the t-critical of 1.96. Therefore, the null

hypothesis six is also rejected. This signifies that there is significant difference in the rating of male and female on challenges of inclusive education of the girl child.

7. Discussions on Findings

The study investigated inclusive education and the girl in contemporary Nigerian society, counseling implications. Findings of the study revealed that the causes of inclusive education for the girl child include achieving education for all, to avoid their separation from homes and families, and to be prepared early to adapt to the realities of life. Also to increase access to education for underserved groups. This finding is in line with that of Odom, Buyese, and Soukakou (2011) who gave the history concerning the formation of inclusion of special needs students. They also opined that this was with the hope that inclusion would mean more than placing children with special needs in the regular education classrooms, including a sense of belonging, social relationships, and academic development, improvement and learning.

This result also confirms the finding of Bankole and Eboiyehi (2003) who found out that the major areas of the many international conferences were eliminating all gender stereotyping, improving access and quality of girl-child education. This also us in line with the Salamanca (1994) proclamation, the aim of inclusive education in the NPE (2004) section B and C; ad Adeniyi and Egunjobi (2003) who stated that it is to make the school day experience for the persons with special needs to be as similar as possible to that experienced by typical students as both progress in regular classrooms.

Findings of the study also showed that the benefits of inclusive education for the girl child include academic achievement, behavior modification of the special need student with psychological disorder, individual difference, increased social interactions and building of self-confidence. This is in consonance with the findings of Ntshangase, Mdikana and Cronk (2008) that have shown a positive result of the effects of inclusion classes on the academic achievement and social interaction for students with special needs. They also noted the effect of

inclusion on the self-esteem of the special needs students: self-esteem being the spring board for appropriate social interactions. This result is very encouraging, according to Lamport, Grawes and Ward (2012), for schools promoting inclusive practices.

Lamport, Grawes and Ward (2012) found out that special needs students' do not indicate low self-esteem than non-disabled students in their findings. Calabrese, Patterson, Liu, Godvin, and Hummel (2008) also found out that inclusion help was an increase in social interaction both in and outside the classroom. Contributing to the debate on academic progress of the special needs student in an inclusive classroom is the study of Dessemonet, Bless, and Morin (2012). The study found out that the student's inclusion classroom did perform better than those in special schools.

The result of the study also revealed that gender disparity, early marriage, gender-based violence and child labour are the major challenges of inclusive education for the girl child. Other includes poverty and geographical isolation. The findings corroborates the work of Isola and Osundina (2016) who posited that the implication of discrimination on inclusive quality education for the girl child will breed undereducated women, which invariably will result into high risk poverty, maternal mortality, child mortality, less skilled women population, all culminate to affect the political, social and economic development of their communities. As a result, their work has identified certain challenges confronting strong establishment of quality inclusive education attitude, religion, poverty, early marriage, pregnancy and geographical isolation.

This finding supports the positions of Bankole and Eboiyehi (2003); Abimiku (2006) and Oniye (2010) who reported that girls with disabilities are among the world's most marginalized groups of society, resulting from social norms and cultural bias around gender and disability. Those agencies committed to gender equity in education overlook the specific situation of and

added barriers faced by girls and women with disabilities, and those who are committed to disability inclusion and equity fail to apply a gender perspective. As a result, girls with disabilities have limited educational opportunities. Oniye (2010) while contributing to this problem is of the opinion that tradition is a constraint on the girl child education. Furthermore, Adella (2014) observed early pregnancy as another key factor mitigating against the girl child education.

8. Counselling Implications

Counselling is a process of assisting individuals to understand themselves and their environment better. The following counselling strategies are found to be useful in inclusive education, such as, life-skills therapy, cognitive restructuring technique, peer tutoring technique, modeling technique, collaborative learning technique, transitional analysis therapy and individualized counselling technique. Through these counselling strategies, the counselor can help his students in identifying specific thinking skills to enable them become aware of themselves in order to attain their potentials. The students can also be taught how to develop positive self-perception and positive relationships. Group discussion, collaboration and interaction among students can be encouraged. Students can be encouraged to learn through dramatization. One-to-one counselling, and career talks technique where students are equipped with career information can be used to help the students.

9. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that inclusive education is very beneficiary to the girl child since it exposes her to friend ships, social and behavioural skills, skill acquisition and increased self-esteem and confidence. Furthermore, academic skills are learnt. The aim of this research was also to provide a synthesis of the understanding of barriers to education for girls with disabilities and make some useful suggestions that will address these barriers. Counselors as trained professionals in collaboration with teachers and the school authority can effectively help the

students in inclusive education through life-skills therapy, collaborative learning technique, peer tutoring, modeling, cognitive restructuring technique and career talks.

10. Recommendations

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

- Inclusive education teachers should learn management techniques for emotional and behavioural disorders so that they are able to spend less time on discipline and more time in instruction.
- Gender disparity, which has limited the enrollment of girl child to quality education in Nigeria should be discouraged.
- There should be more massive awareness programs especially in the rural areas that would sensitize people on the need to send their special needs children to school.

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