

**MIDDLE BASIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' AWARENESS AND
MANAGEMENT OF DYSLEXIA AMONG PUPILS IN ILORIN AND
SOKOTO, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study assessed middle basic school teachers' awareness and management of dyslexia among pupils. A descriptive survey designed was adopted for the study. The population comprised all middle basic teachers in Ilorin and Sokoto Metropolis. An adopted questionnaire with psychometric properties of content validity and reliability index of 0.78 was used for the study. The instrument was administrated to 641 basic school teachers in Ilorin and Sokoto metropolis. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings of the study revealed that majority of middle basic school teachers in the Ilorin and Sokoto are not aware of and lack adequate management strategies of dyslexia among basic school pupils. The study recommended, that there is the need to make special education a "Compulsory/Required" course in the Nigeria Teacher education training programme at both National Certificate in Education (NCE) and University level as this will provide teachers adequate knowledge of strategies they can use in managing dyslexia among pupils.

Keywords: Dyslexia, Disability, Middle basic, Awareness and Management strategies

Introduction

For many years, teachers have been concerned about students who appear normal, intelligent, and healthy, but struggle with reading, learning and writing. These difficulties are identified under the concept of dyslexia. Then the big question; what is dyslexia? Before considering what the term 'dyslexia' encompasses, it is worthwhile to consider what dyslexia is not. Olson (2002) states that poor reading ability, which is directly linked to deficient educational instruction and/or home environment, does not constitute dyslexia. However, there are a significant number of children who struggle to learn and read effectively despite adequate instruction. These are the children who are considered 'dyslexic'.

Dyslexia literally means 'difficulty with words'. Dyslexia is a specific learning disability in which the individual experiences difficulties with acquiring the necessary skills for effective reading. Dyslexics also experience difficulties with spelling, writing, and pronunciation of words. It is considered a complex neurologically based condition (Department of Basic Education, 2010). Individuals who struggle with dyslexia experience lack of academic progress, lowered self-esteem, misinterpretation of social cues, depression, and anxiety. It has a great wide effect on children involving aspects such as education, career, communication and even health. Some studies demonstrated that the children with reading disabilities reported more depress mood, scored higher on the measures of anxiety symptoms and more somatic complaints than children without reading problems (Maughan, Rowe, Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 2003). Other studies showed that the adolescents with dyslexia had higher rates of externalizing behaviour problem, aggressive and delinquent behaviours compared with their peers who were normal readers (Casey, Levy, Brown & Brooks-Gunn, 1992). The importance of research in dyslexia has been well known by educational, medical and social researchers in many parts of the world while in some developing society such as Nigeria, It is still very scanty and required more search in the educational sector at all levels (lower, middle or upper basic school) even at the senior secondary school level.

One of the primary functions of schooling is to ensure that the child acquires literacy and numeracy skills. The school also teaches other needed skills by the society. Most children find schooling exciting; while some develop fear, anxiety and may not cope adequately. They have difficulties with learning the letters of the alphabets, associating sounds with a letter that represent them, identifying/generating words or counting syllabus in words (phonological awareness) segmenting words into individual sounds or blending sounds to make words (phonemic awareness) etc. Unfortunately, large numbers of these school children suffer from learning disabilities which are unnoticed by their teachers or educators. However, a careful observation and diagnosis of these children show that they suffer from dyslexia (Olson, 2002). Dyslexia is a reading, writing and spelling disorder that can involve difficulties in visual or auditory perception.

Dyslexia, for many, is having difficulties in reading and writing. It is mutilation in the brain's ability to translate written images received from the eyes into meaningful

language. It is associated with problems in expressive or receptive, oral or written language, and these may emerge in one's reading, spelling, and writing, speaking or listening ability (Pollock & Waller, 2000). Dyslexia is neither a disease nor a physical disability (Ott, 1997; Riddick, Wolfe & Lumsdon, 2003; West, 1997). People with dyslexia process information in a different part of the brain than non-dyslexics do.

In relating dyslexia with learning disabilities, the National Institute of Neurological Disorder and Stroke (2010) defined dyslexia as a disorder that impairs a person's ability to read and which can visibly manifest as a difficulty with phonological awareness, phonological decoding, orthographic coding, and auditory short term memory. Thus dyslexia is a learning disability that can hinder a pupil's ability to read, write, spell and sometimes speak.

Nigeria currently lacks available statistical evidence as proof of the percentage of people affected by dyslexia in the country. Although there are no existing figures to support the claim of the existence of dyslexia in Nigeria, it can still be argued that there is yet no justifiable reason to suggest that dyslexia does not exist in Nigeria as extensive research in relation to the percentage of people affected by dyslexia and its effects on learning is yet to be carried out (Olson, 2002). Hoyles and Hoyles (2007) argue that dyslexia is no respecter of race; it has a genetic base and it occurs in all countries and cultures. They argued that dyslexia clearly exists and is believed in by many great researchers, educators, and students in developed and developing societies.

In many West African countries, dyslexia is yet to be acknowledged as a specific learning difficulty/disability. This is quite contrary to many western countries where there is growing interest in special needs educators in interventions which focus on presumed underlying processing difficulties (Norwich & Lewis, 2001). In many western parts of the world, dyslexia awareness is wide spread and the percentage of children with dyslexia is known. For instance in the United Kingdom according to the British Dyslexia Association, statistics show that 10% of the population has dyslexia. In America, 5% to 17% of school children are estimated to be dyslexic (Facker & Golonka, 2006). While in Kuwait, the Kuwait Dyslexia Association (KDA) has conducted a popular survey in the year 2004 that highlighted the alarming rate of dyslexia: 6.3% of pupils attending primary schools. Also in South Africa, 23% of their school children had dyslexia (Department of Education, 2007).

The issue of general lack of awareness of dyslexia in Nigeria and Kwara state in particular and its impact on current inclusive (every child count policy of Kwara State Government) learning practices in basic schools in Nigeria is one that is in desperate need of address. Teachers' awareness of dyslexia, particularly its symptoms, plays an important role in the early detection of dyslexia (Ott, 1997). The awareness of the symptoms of dyslexia can help to avoid students with dyslexia the possibility of being labeled as 'lazy', 'slow', or 'stupid'. This awareness also means teachers would be able to refer students to doctors for diagnosis. A study carried out by Miles and Miles (1984) showed that early detection of dyslexia among school children required less time for them to catch up in studies, and help could be provided before frustration sets in (Ott,

1997). This is because the role of the teacher cannot be under-estimated in the success of the learner with dyslexia.

Teacher awareness refers to the recognition and understanding of a phenomenon by the teacher within the educational system. One can reasonably deduce that if teacher awareness and understanding of special needs education is poor, their level of understanding of dyslexia is even lower since it is a sub-division in the field of learning disabilities. Research shows that dyslexia is a confusing term for many teachers as they are often unsure about its definition and generally struggle to tell the difference between dyslexic learners and slow learners (Wadlington, Jacob & Bailey, 1996). According to Wadlington and Wadlington (2005), teachers frequently have misconceptions about dyslexia. Their report showed that teachers' lack of awareness and misconceptions have negative effects for the dyslexia sufferer in the classroom. According to Wadlington and Wadlington (2005), non-recognition of dyslexia and delayed assistance to the learner compounds the problem even further. This lack of awareness and understanding of dyslexia can be attributed to the same factors responsible for the lack of awareness in the area of special needs education as a whole.

According to Kataoka (2004), teacher's awareness of learning disabilities is paramount for provision of an effective remediation. A lack of awareness means that intervention is delayed or never occurs at all. Even if teachers do have an 'awareness' they report that they feel they do not have the necessary skills that are needed to help their learners. They feel a sense of incapability and helplessness (Hayes, 2000). This sense of powerlessness has repercussions for the working relationship between the teacher and the student. Some teachers tend to blame the child's lack of progress on their own lack of teaching skills, others have low expectations of the child, while others have been reported to insult and even physically punish learners who suffer from learning disabilities

Therefore, a lack of interest and recognition of dyslexia by stakeholders who drive the educational system will inevitably impact negatively on policy making, funding allocation and the way specialist teacher training, curriculum planning, teaching and learning, and ultimately inclusion is addressed. Thus, the need to research into this study becomes necessary.

Dyslexia occurs in at least one in ten students /children, putting more than 700 million children and adults worldwide at risk of life-long illiteracy and social exclusion. Significant numbers of pupils with dyslexia go undiagnosed and their symptoms unaddressed, with tragic results, which is largely due to global lack of awareness and knowledge about this common learning difference. Many teachers find it very difficult to identify and manage dyslexic students in their class (Ott, 1997). Too often, however, students with dyslexia remain undiagnosed throughout their school careers, labeled instead as lazy or disruptive (Shaywitz, 2005). These students face the misery of failure early in their lives. The long-term effects of dyslexia on young adults include school failure, depression and increased risk of suicide, delinquency and reoffending.

Studies such as that of Clark and Calder (2005); Regan and Woods (2000) have shown that teachers, even those with more than ten years of experience in teaching, are rather incapable of identifying students with dyslexia, and they lack confidence in teaching and supporting such students. If the difficulties experienced by children with dyslexia are not identified, these will continue into adulthood (Chin, 2004). Therefore, early diagnosis of the problem would assist in an early intervention for children with dyslexia. Teachers in basic schools play an important role in the early detection of the dyslexics as they are the persons next to parents who spend long hours with school age children.

Teachers' awareness and management of students with dyslexia are important in helping these students cope with the seemingly easy but actually painstaking school work. Students' success academically may be affected if the problem is left undetected throughout their school years. Only when teachers are aware of the symptoms shown by students being dyslexics, would they be able to make referrals to the appropriate parties such as school administrative board and parents. Early referral made would enable students who are suspected of being dyslexics to be assessed such that necessary arrangement for intervention would be made. Besides, teachers' awareness of dyslexia would affect their management of students with dyslexia; and teachers' management of students with dyslexia is influential in determining how much or how little students would progress in learning. In general, the level of teacher awareness of special needs education and in particular, dyslexia, has been relatively under-researched (Robuck, 2007). It is, therefore, imperative that more research is conducted in this regard as the impact of teacher awareness of dyslexia is paramount to the success of learners.

This study investigated into middle basic school teachers' awareness of dyslexia in the middle basic schools in Ilorin and Sokoto metropolis. Specifically, the study identified:

- a. middle basic school teachers awareness of dyslexia among their pupils.
- b. middle basic school teachers level of awareness of dyslexia as a learning difficulty that pupils face
- c. how middle basic school teachers' identify dyslexic pupils.
- d. how middle basic school teachers' manage the identified dyslexic pupils
- e. whether difference exists in the level of awareness of middle basic school teachers on dyslexia as a learning difficulty among basic schools pupils in Ilorin and Sokoto.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. Are middle basic school teachers aware of dyslexia among their pupils?
2. What is the level of awareness of middle basic school teachers on dyslexia as a learning difficulty facing pupils?
3. How do middle basic school teachers identify dyslexic pupils in their class?
4. How do middle basic school teachers manage dyslexic pupils after been identified?

Research Hypothesis

Ho₁ There is no significant difference in the level of awareness of middle basic school teachers on dyslexia as a learning difficulty among basic schools pupils in Ilorin and Sokoto State.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The choice of the descriptive survey was in line with Sambo (2008), who maintained that it is concerned with the gathering of information on peoples' opinion. The target population for this study comprised middle basic school teachers teaching English Language, Mathematics, Basic Sciences and Social Studies in both private and public schools; s in Ilorin and Sokoto metropolis. There are 3,923(UBEB, 2016, Ilorin and Sokoto, 2016) middle Basic School teachers in Ilorin and Sokoto metropolis respectively, out of which 641 respondents were purposively sampled. This is in line with The Research Advisors (2006) table for selecting the sample size. The respondents consisted of both male and female teachers. Stratified sampling technique was adopted in the selection of 415 Ilorin and 226 Sokoto from both private and public schools' teachers respectively.

A -25 items four-point-Likert scale researcher's designed questionnaire was used for eliciting the needed data from the respondents. The questionnaire contained two sections. Bio-data of the respondent constituted the first section while the second contained 25 items with 4 points responses (Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaires were administered to the respondents by the researchers. The questionnaire items were validated by experts in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin to ensure its content validity. This is in line with Sambo (2008) who maintained that the best procedure for validating research instrument is to give it to a panel of experts. A test- re-test reliability method was carried out with a sample of 40 teachers in three basic schools within Ilorin metropolis. Three-week interval period was given. The scores of the first were correlated with the scores of the second using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and reliability index of 0.71 was obtained. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics

Results

Five research questions were raised in this study. Research questions one and two were answered using frequency count and percentage while research questions three and four were answered using mean and the only hypothesis was analyse using t-test.

Research Question One: Are middle basic school teachers awareness of dyslexia among their pupils?

Teachers awareness of dyslexic pupils in class

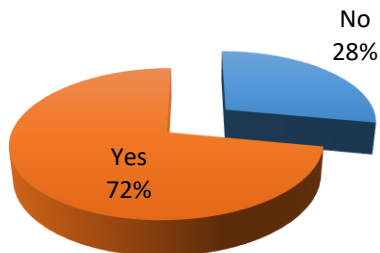


Figure 1: Teachers’ general awareness of dyslexic pupils

It is shown from figure 1 that 72% of the respondents are not aware of dyslexic pupils in their class while only 28% of them are aware. This means that majority of the respondents are not aware of their pupil's inability to read from the chalkboard or his/ her note could be as a result of learning problems such as dyslexia.

Research Question Two: What is the level of awareness of middle basic school teachers’ on dyslexia as a learning difficulty facing pupils?

Level of Awareness

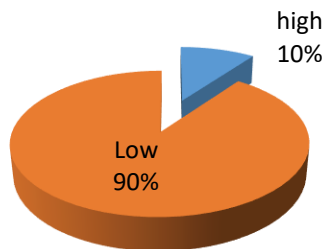


Figure 2: middle basic school teachers’ general level of dyslexia as a learning problem

It is shown in figure 2 that middle basic teacher’s general level of dyslexia as a learning problem is low because 90% of them indicated that they are aware of dyslexia as a learning difficulty facing pupils.

Research Question Three: *How do middle basic school teachers identify dyslexia among their pupils?*

Table 1: Mean how middle basic school teachers identify dyslexia among their pupils

S/N	Items	N	Mean
1	Identifying the symptoms/characteristics of dyslexia	637	2.01
2	Identifying the characteristics of a dyslexic pupil as opposed to that of a slow learner	637	1.07
3	By identifying a learner who is in need of a diagnostic assessment with regards to dyslexia	637	2.01

Table 1 shows how teachers identify dyslexia among their students. with a benchmark mean of 2.50, any item that is below the benchmark mean is not considered as a means of identifying dyslexia while any item that is above the benchmark mean is considered as a means of identifying dyslexia. Thus, from the table, it can be said that middle basic school teachers in Ilorin and Sokoto metropolis could not identify any of their pupils displaying any of the characteristics of dyslexia. This is because they all have a mean which is below the benchmark mean.

Research Question Four: *How do middle basic school teachers manage dyslexic pupils?*

Table 2: mean of how middle basic school teachers manage dyslexia pupils after identification

S/N	Items	N	Mean
1	I limit the number of instructions given at a time	637	1.27
2	I allow dyslexic pupils to sit close to the instructional focal point in the classroom	637	2.18
3	I try to repeat a sequence of instructions at appropriate points during practical activities	637	1.02
4	I add positive comments to assessed work	637	0.13
5	I focus on the dyslexic's individual progress without comparing them to the rest of the class	637	1.02
6	I use the homework diary as a tool for communication with parents	637	0.30
7	I keep parents informed of their child's progress	637	1.13
8	I am aware that dyslexics may have an inability to remember spoken instructions and this can lead to inattentiveness or apparent laziness	637	0.98
9	I am aware that dyslexics may have an inability to process written directions	637	0.06
10	I believe group work is detrimental to the dyslexic pupils on a set class activity	637	2.00
11	I check that my instructions are clear and fully understood	637	0.11
12	I vary activities so those pupils become less fatigued	637	0.75
13	I use a variety of different teaching methods	637	0.39
14	I believe pupil discussion in class is counter productive	637	0.64
15	I allow extra time in tests and examinations	637	0.10
16	I praise efforts as well as work well done	637	1.30
17	I insist that dyslexics read aloud in class	637	0.92

Table 2 shows how teachers manage dyslexic pupils. Thus, from the table, it can be said that all of the items falls below the benchmark of 2.50, this is an indication that middle basic school teachers do not manage dyslexia pupils in their class well. This is due to the fact that they cannot identify any dyslexics pupils in their class, meaning there will not be any need for management.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the level of awareness of middle basic school teachers on dyslexia as a learning difficulty among basic schools pupils in Ilorin and Sokoto State.

Table 3: t-test of level of awareness of Ilorin and Sokoto State middle basic school teacher’s on dyslexia

Town/ metropolis	N	Mean	Std. D.	df	t-value	Sig (2- tail)	Remark
Ilorin	415	27.7992	4.10688	439	1.053	.293	Not rejected
Sokoto	226	28.2448	4.62634				

Table 3 revealed that the calculated t-value is 1.053 with significant probability value of $0.293 > 0.05$. Since the probability value is greater than alpha value, therefore the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that no significant difference existed in the awareness level of middle basic teachers on dyslexia as a learning problem faced by pupils of Ilorin and Sokoto States.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that majority of middle basic school teachers lack awareness of dyslexia generally as a learning problem/difficulty common among pupils. This implies that they find it very difficult to know whether it is prevalence among pupils in their classes, identifying dyslexic pupils in their class became impossible as such, they could not manage dyslexic pupils. This finding corroborates the study of Wadlington, Jacob, and Bailey (1996) whose findings confirmed that most of the primary school teachers do confuse the term dyslexia and are often unsure about its definition and generally find it difficult to differentiate between dyslexic learners and slow learners. Middle basic school teachers could not even differentiate between a slow, lazy and even at times a speech impaired learner. This finding also agrees with the study of Wadlington and Wadlington (2005) whose findings revealed that teachers frequently have misconceptions about dyslexia and they lack awareness and misconceptions which resulted into negative effects for the dyslexic pupils in the class. It could be deduced from the findings that teachers’ lack of awareness could be as a result of lack of adequate teacher training in the field of dyslexia and special education generally. This could be why there is no significant

difference in the level of awareness of teachers from Ilorin and Sokoto State metropolis on dyslexia as a learning problem among basic school pupil. It is evident from the literature that Nigeria education system operates a central system of education with unify curriculum. So what is applicable in the teacher training programme of Ilorin in Kwara state is not different from that of Sokoto, in Sokoto State. High quality training of teachers would enable them to identify pupils with dyslexia. Once they are identified then they would be helped hence, they would be able to make progress in their academic pursuit.

Conclusion

Research shows that teachers' level of awareness of dyslexia and how to manage it effectively is generally low. Until dyslexia is given status in Nigeria as a learning difficulty/disability and until extended research on dyslexia awareness and its impact on learning and educational achievement are thoroughly investigated in Nigeria, there may not be a justifiable reason for dyslexia to be considered a learning difficulty/disability worthy of attention at government policy level. As a result, those affected by it may continue to be disadvantaged by an educational system that does not fully include them or take into account their learning needs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study it was recommended that, there is the need to make special education a "Compulsory/Required" course in the Nigeria Teacher education training programme at both National Certificate in Education (NCE) and University level. This will go a long way to educate pre-service teachers and offer them adequate knowledge of different types and forms of learning difficulty before becoming certified teachers. This will help to tackle misconceptions, negative attitudes and issues of identification and management of learning difficulty such as dyslexia.

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