



## FACTORS AFFECTING THE EDUCATIONAL GROWTH OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract:

This study investigated factors affecting the educational growth of persons with disabilities in special schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. It aimed to identify the educational challenges faced by persons with disabilities, explore their socio-economic factors, and assess the institutional support structures available in special schools. A total of 50 students were randomly selected from two special schools: Durbar Grammar School, Oyo and Federal College of Special Education, Oyo. A descriptive statistical technique was employed to analyze the data, with emphasis on peculiar features like their frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Results of the study revealed that 76% respondents were denied access to learning materials and 74% had no access to assistive technology like screen readers that could improve their educational growth; family background and transportation impacted their educational growth, while 78% respondents affirmed great support from their teachers and the staff of the schools. Based on these results, it was recommended that there is an urgent need to increase the availability and accessibility of learning materials and assistive technologies to support students with diverse needs. Similarly, parents and guardians of persons with special needs should be encouraged to release their children and wards for enrolment in the special school to aid their learning experience.

**Keywords:** disabilities, schools, educational growth, accessibility, technology, family background

### 1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental right for all individuals, including those with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities exist in every society globally. Both within and beyond various educational institutions, there are learners who possess unique needs that demand tailored educational approaches (Soto & Lynch, 2022). These children, falling

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into the category of special needs, cannot thrive in traditional classroom settings; instead, they require specialized education and support services to reach their fullest potential (Babatunde *et al.*, 2020). In Nigeria, like many other countries, efforts have been made to ensure access to education for children with disabilities through the establishment of special schools. Despite these efforts, there are still challenges that hinder the educational growth of handicapped students in special schools. These individuals may face challenges such as learning or attention issues, intellectual disabilities, behavioral disorders, physical or health impairments, communication disorders, hearing impairments, and visual impairments (Gerber, 2017). The education of handicapped children has long been a topic of concern and study. Physically challenged students often have problems accessing educational opportunities, from physical barriers to social stigma (Famayo, 2010). From the record, approximately 20% of students at the school period stand for special needs (Limaye, 2016). According to Garuba (2003), knowledge of “disability” has already moved from a medical model to a social model, concentrating on human rights and the challenges orchestrated by nature, societal behaviour, cultural prejudice, myths and mistreatment.

The integration of students with severe handicaps into regular classrooms with their non-disabled peers has been a growing trend, driven by philosophical, legal, and empirical support (Nkechi, 2013). Integrating these students can provide advantages for both those with and without handicaps, as the resources and instructional technology needed may help a lot of students who are struggling in the current educational system. However, students with disabilities, learning difficulties, and disadvantages remain one of the most segregated groups in public schools that must be brought to a minimal level so that improvement for learning may be provided (Famayo, 2022). Factors repeatedly identified as facilitating or hindering equity and inclusion include legal frameworks, funding models, assessment arrangements, school structure, class size, the use of individual teaching programs, the involvement of additional teachers and aides, teacher training Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) prohibit any sort of exclusion from educational opportunities on the basis of sex, ethnic origin, language, religion, nationality, socio-economic conditions, abilities, etc. Therefore, there is a need for every government to ensure that persons with disabilities are blended and integrated into society to avoid issues of discrimination and apathy (Famayo, 2024).

However, the educational experiences of children with disabilities in special schools often face unique challenges that require targeted interventions and support mechanisms to foster their holistic development. Research indicates that several factors influence the educational growth of students with disabilities in special schools. One critical factor is the availability and adequacy of educational resources and facilities tailored to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities (Adebisi *et al.*, 2014). These resources include specialized teaching materials, assistive technologies, and trained personnel such as special education teachers and therapists. Societal attitudes and perceptions towards disability also play a significant role in shaping the educational experiences of persons with disabilities. Negative attitudes, stigma, and discrimination

can create barriers to inclusion and participation in educational settings (Adigun, 2018). Studies show that parental involvement positively correlates with academic achievement and socio-emotional well-being among students with disabilities (Babatunde *et al.*, 2013).

Other factors linked to the academic growth of children with disabilities are: the availability and utilization of assistive technologies, the impact of teacher-student interactions, parental involvement, and the overall support infrastructure within special schools. The labeling of students as “handicapped” has been replaced by broader descriptions of their learning needs. Garuba (2003) noted that students with disability are children who differ significantly from the average to such an extent that provision of special services becomes mandatory for effective learning, social participation and adjustment. In the same vein, Limaye (2016) observed that the visually impaired students cannot effectively benefit from the regular classroom arrangements without provision for Braille, typewriter, recorded tapes and other intervention programmes. Also, the hearing-impaired need supportive services through sign language, hearing aids and those with mobility problems equally need prosthetic materials, modern wheelchairs, walkers and other mobility devices (Famayo, 2024). The same is applicable to other categories of students with disability. Gerber (2017) emphasized that special education is tailored to the unique needs of the learners.

Persons with disabilities have been defined legally as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in conjunction with attitudinal and environmental barriers, may prevent them from fully and effectively participating in society on an equal basis to other people (Article 1, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD]). Disability is a complex and multifaceted concept, encompassing biological, psychological, social and cultural factors that often give human beings a great concern for this creature as they are entirely different. Special education, according to FRN (2014), describes special education as a customized educational programme designed to meet the unique needs of persons with special needs that the general education programme cannot cater for.

Special education is of great importance for children with learning disabilities, because it gives them the opportunity to get quality education in line with their unique needs. Special education enables every student to gain a high level of independence and reach their full potential. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provide students with disabilities access to educational services that allow them to enjoy the same rights as students without disabilities, setting forth a framework describing that instruction should be provided in a regular classroom, a classroom specially modified to meet the special needs of students, or under special conditions (individualized education or instruction in small groups in a special-needs classroom). It is also important to note that public schools are obligated to provide special educational conditions at no additional cost. To address the unique needs of students with learning disabilities, an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is developed for each child. This collaborative approach involves a team of teachers, specialists, and family members, with parents playing a vital role in sharing their in-depth knowledge of their child. Together, they

design a personalized educational plan tailored to the child's specific disability, ensuring the school provides the necessary support for the child to succeed and receive a quality education. The IEP team works together to identify the child's strengths, challenges, and goals, creating a comprehensive plan that addresses their academic, social, and emotional needs. By working together, parents, teachers, and specialists can help children with learning disabilities reach their full potential.

The significance of this research stems from the fundamental principle that every child, regardless of physical or cognitive ability, deserves equal access to education and opportunities for academic growth. Ultimately, the findings of this research endeavor to contribute to the ongoing efforts towards creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment where every child, including those with disabilities, can thrive and reach their full potential. By identifying and analyzing the factors influencing their educational growth, this study seeks to inform policy-makers, educators, and stakeholders about the specific needs and barriers faced by children with disabilities in Oyo State's special school settings.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Despite the presence of special schools in Oyo State aimed at providing educational support for persons with disabilities, there exists a significant gap in achieving optimal educational growth among these students. Several factors contribute to this disparity, including but not limited to inadequate resources, socio-economic barriers, and lack of specialized training for teachers, limited access to assistive technology, societal stigma, and administrative challenges. However, a comprehensive understanding of the specific factors influencing the educational growth of handicapped students in Oyo State special schools is lacking.

Disability is part of being human and is integral to the human experience. It results from the interaction between health conditions such as dementia, blindness or spinal cord injury, and a range of environmental and personal factors. An estimated 1.3 billion people or 16% of the global population experience a significant disability today, with 1177 special schools in Nigeria, which is not even enough to cater for the number of disabled persons in the country as significant number of these children are still with their parents and guardians at home perplexing of what to do with them, either to poison or wishing them quick death to remove problems and social stigma and embarrassment from their neighbours and the society at large.

In order to determine the factors responsible for the educational growth of persons with disabilities, the study will set out to examine and explore the specific educational challenges faced by persons with disabilities, the socio-economic factors that impact their educational growth and also to examine the teaching strategies and methodologies employed in special schools and evaluate their efficacy in facilitating the educational progress of persons with disabilities in special schools.

## 2.1 Objectives

The objectives were set to:

- 1) Identify the specific educational challenges faced by persons with disabilities in special schools in Oyo State.
- 2) Explore the socioeconomic factors, including economic status, family support, and access to resources, that may impact the educational growth of persons with disabilities in Oyo State.
- 3) Assess the adequacy and effectiveness of institutional support structures and resources available in special schools to address the unique needs of persons with disabilities.

## 2.2 Research Questions

- 1) What are the specific educational challenges encountered by children with disabilities attending special schools in Oyo State?
- 2) How do socio-economic factors, such as economic status and family support, influence the educational growth of persons with disabilities in special schools?
- 3) What is the adequacy and effectiveness of institutional support structures and resources available in special schools to address the educational needs of persons with disabilities?

## 3. Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The targeted population for the study comprised persons with disabilities in the junior secondary school in special schools in Oyo state, Nigeria. The sample for this study comprised 50 respondents who were randomly selected from two special schools in Oyo state which formed 25 respondents each.

A specially designed questionnaire that contained the biodata of the respondents and questions related to educational challenges, socioeconomic factors, using a modified Likert scale, rating scale and a nominal scale of yes or no was employed to collect data for this study.

The instrument was validated through experts in the field of adapted physical education, who finally formed the distributed questionnaire to the respondents.

The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using the test-retest reliability by administering the questionnaire to a pilot group of 20 participants on two separate occasions, with a two-week interval, and a correlation coefficient of  $r$  of 0.67 was obtained using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC).

The administration of the questionnaire was done by the researcher with the aid of 4 research assistants. The descriptive statistics were employed, such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

#### 4. Results

**Table 1a:** Demographic data of the respondents on sex

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	26	52.0
Female	24	48.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above table shows that 52.0% of the respondents were males, while 48.0% were females. This indicates a higher prevalence of males than females in the surveyed area.

**Table 1b:** Demographic data of the respondents' age

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15 – 20	24	48.0
20 – 25	26	52.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that ages 20 - 25 formed 52% of the respondents, and ages 15 -20 formed 48% of the respondents.

**Table 1c:** Demographic data on types of disability

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Visual impairment	14	28.0
Hearing impairment	13	26.0
Physical impairment	19	38.0
Mental retardation	4	8.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table reveals that 38% of the respondents had physical impairment, 28% had visual impairment, 26% had hearing impairment and 8% intellectual disability.

**Research question 1:** What are the specific educational challenges encountered by handicapped children attending special schools in Oyo state?

**Table 2:** Educational challenges faced by persons with disabilities

Educational challenges faced by persons with disabilities	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Standard deviation ( $\sigma$ )
There is no easy access to learning materials	11(22)	27(54)	9(18)	3(6)	2.08	0.804
There is no form of bullying or discrimination in your school	5(10)	28(56)	13(26)	4(8)	2.32	0.768
There is no easy access to assistive technology like screen readers, speech-to-text software etc. to aid learning	11(22)	26(52)	12(24)	1(2)	2.06	0.740

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You find it easy to take notes while the teacher is teaching	7(14)	26(52)	13(26)	4(8)	2.28	0.809
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**Note:** The values in brackets ( ) represent the percentage of each frequency.

The table above showed that 76% of the respondents agreed that there is no easy access to learning materials, 24% respondents disagreed. The mean score of 2.08 reflects a positive response, while the standard deviation of 0.804 indicates some level of variability in responses.

The study also revealed that 66% of the respondents confirmed there was no form of bullying or discrimination in their school, and 34% disagreed. The mean of the respondents was 2.32, and the standard deviation was 0.768, reflecting the results of the findings clustering around their mean value.

On access to assistive technology, 74% of the respondents declined it; while 26% consented they had easy access to assistive technology like screen readers, speech readers, speech-to-text software, and others, to aid learning. This represents a mean of 2.06 and a standard deviation of 0.740, suggesting a closer value of responses to the average.

On whether teachers make teaching and writing less difficult for the respondents, 76% agreed, while 24% of the respondents disagreed, resulting in a mean of 2.06 and a standard deviation of 0.740, which implies that the mean is a relatively good representative of the responses in the question.

Also, this section asked if respondents found it easy to take notes while the teacher is teaching, 66% of them agreed, while 34% of the respondents disagreed. This recorded a mean of 2.28 and a standard deviation of 0.809, indicating a relatively large increase in the dispersion of their responses compared to the responses of other questions.

**Research question 2:** What are the socio-economic factors that impact the educational growth of persons with disabilities?

**Table 3:** Socio-economic factors impacting the educational growth of persons with disabilities

Socio-economic Factors	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Standard deviation ( $\sigma$ )
Family background	6(12)	17(34)	15(30)	9(18)	3(6)	2.72	1.089
Transportation to school	1(2)	23(46)	18(36)	8(16)	0(0)	2.66	0.772
Access to healthcare services	2(4)	11(22)	24(48)	12(24)	1(2)	2.98	0.845
Access to smart technology for learning	2(4)	14(28)	13(26)	18(36)	2(4)	3.08	0.997
Access to financial support	0(0)	16(32)	25(50)	9(18)	0(0)	2.86	0.700
Social	1(2)	17(34)	24(48)	8(16)	0(0)	2.78	0.737

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inclusion							
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**Note:** The values in brackets ( ) represent the percentage of each frequency.

The table above shows that 34% of the respondents agreed family background frequently affects educational growth, while 30% went for occasionally and 18% for rarely, indicating a mean of 2.72 and a standard deviation of 1.089, which indicates a significant variability in the extent to which family background affects educational growth.

Also, the table measures the frequency at which transportation as a socioeconomic factor affects respondents' educational growth., 46% believed it frequently affects their educational growth, 36% selected occasionally, and 16% revealed that it rarely affects their educational growth. This shows a mean of 2.66 and a standard deviation of 0.772, which indicates that the responses cluster relatively around the mean.

On access to health care services and their educational growth, 22% said it frequently affects them, 48% believed that it occasionally affects their educational growth, and 24% said that it rarely affects their educational growth. The overall response has a mean of 2.98 and a standard deviation of 0.845, showing some increased level of variability in their responses.

Similarly, this subsection of the study also provided insight into respondents' access to smart technology for learning. It can be seen from the table above that 28% frequently have access to smart technology to aid learning, 26% occasionally gain access to this smart technology, and 36% rarely have access to it. This response has a mean of 2.86 and a standard deviation of 0.70, which indicates a low variability in the responses of students compared to the value of the mean.

As regards access to financial support, 32% believed they frequently have access to financial support, 50% agreed that they occasionally have access to financial support, and 18% selected that they rarely have access to financial support to aid their educational growth. This response has a mean of 3.08 and a high standard deviation of 0.997, indicating a significant increase in the variability of the responses far away from the value of the mean.

Finally, this study argued that social inclusion is one of the socioeconomic factors affecting the educational growth of disabled people; as a result, it also provided insight into the social inclusion of respondents based on their responses. 2% believed that they are always affected by social inclusion, 34% are frequently affected, 48% are occasionally affected, and 16% of respondents are rarely affected. This response has a mean of 2.78 and a standard deviation of 0.737, which shows that the responses cluster significantly around the mean.

**Research question 3:** What are the institutional support structures available in special schools?



**Table 4:** Institutional support structure available in special schools

Questions	Yes	No	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Standard deviation ( $\sigma$ )
Are there adequate resources and facilities in your school to support your learning needs?	28(56)	22(44)	1.44	0.501
Are the counseling services available in your school?	29(58)	21(42)	1.42	0.499
Do you receive support from teachers and staff in your school?	39(78)	11(22)	1.22	0.418
Is there a provision for accommodation in your school?	31(62)	19(38)	1.38	0.490
Does your school have accessible classrooms for all types of disabilities?	27(54)	23(46)	1.46	0.503
Is the curriculum adapted for different types of disabilities?	29(58)	21(42)	1.42	0.499

**Note:** The values in brackets ( ) represent the percentage of each frequency.

This shows that 56% of the respondents confirmed adequacy of resources and facilities in the school to support their learning needs, while 44% respondents declined it with a mean of 1.44 and a standard deviation of 0.501, which implies a relative clustering of these dual responses around the mean.

On whether counseling services are available in their school, 58% confirmed it, while 42% declined it, with a mean of 1.42 and a standard deviation of 0.499, which revealed a further clustering of the values around the mean.

Furthermore, on whether respondents receive support from teachers and staff in their school. Interestingly, 78% affirmed this while 22% refuted it, which implies a significant percentage of respondents have access to relevant support from the teachers and staff in their school. These responses are backed with a mean of 1.22 and a standard deviation of 0.418, which reveals that the responses are very close to the mean of the responses.

Similarly, this subsection also asked respondents if there is a provision for accommodation in their school. 62% confirmed this, while 38% declined it, which provides further need for support to these special schools in Oyo state, either from government institutions or private institutions, to increase the availability of accommodation in these special schools. These responses have a mean of 1.38 and a standard deviation of 0.490, which implies a slight increase in the standard deviation compared to other standard deviations so far, but still shows that the responses cluster around the mean.

Also, the subsection asked if respondents have accessible classrooms for all types of disabilities in their schools. 54% agreed that they have access, while 46% disagreed that they do not have access. The response has a mean of 1.46, and its standard deviation increased to 0.503.

Finally, on the question of whether the curriculum is adapted for different types of disabilities, 58% affirmed it, while 42% disagreed. Meanwhile, their responses have a

mean of 1.42 and a standard deviation of 0.499, which shows that most of the responses cluster significantly around the value of the mean.

## 5. Discussion

In response to research question 1, the finding from the table shows that 66% of the respondents agreed that there is no form of bullying or discrimination in their school. This is in line with the findings of Allam & Martin (2021) that inclusive education eliminates all forms of separation and discrimination that persons with disabilities might be experiencing in society. Furthermore, on access to assistive technology, 74% of the respondents declined that there is no easy access to assistive technology which aligns with the submission of Aruldas *et al.*, (2023) & Paulley & Augustus (2023) that a large number of students enrolled in Nigerian colleges and universities expressed dissatisfaction with their programmes or performed poorly as a result of lack of support services which affect their educational growth. As regards easy access to learning materials, 76% of the respondents disagreed that there is no easy access to learning materials. In the work of Salau *et al.*, (2024), there were insufficient facilities for the necessary physical accessibility features, assistive technologies, and specialized equipment required to accommodate students with disabilities or special needs, and therefore stated that government should invest in assistive technology (communication devices, software), learning materials to help children with special needs engage more effectively in their learning.

Under the socio-economic factors that impact the educational growth of persons with disabilities, the findings show that 50% of the respondents agreed they occasionally have access to financial support, which implies that they only get it once in a while. This corroborates the result of Adigun (2018) & Osaat (2023) that there is a very low concern for special needs education even by state governments and thus special needs education programmes have consistently been underfunded which has thereby contributed to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, therefore there is a need for financial aid to support educational growth to enable students to have access to necessary resources.

As regards the institutional support structure available in special schools, the findings show a similar pattern as seen in adequacy of resources, where 56% of the respondents confirmed adequacy of resources and facilities in the school to support their learning needs, which means the support structures are present but not sufficient. However, extant studies of Kauffman & Hornby (2020) and Allam & Martin (2021) opined that there are no necessary resources to aid these students' learning, which might lead to them not being able to utilize well in either special or conventional schools across the nation. In the work of Ayub & Abubakar (2022), it was discovered that many victims of disabilities face institutional challenges. These challenges range from discrimination, exploitation, violence, stigma, inadequate housing, and education to health care.

In conclusion, the findings revealed that though there are some areas of strength, such as the presence of support from teachers and absence of bullying, significant

challenges remain regarding access to learning materials, assistive technology and socio-economic barriers. Institutional support structures are present, but they must be consistently applied and made uniformly available; therefore, these challenges require a comprehensive approach that includes increased funding, better resource allocation and more robust support systems to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a quality education that meets their needs.

## 6. Conclusion

The study revealed that while there are some positive aspects in the education of persons with disabilities, such as support from teachers and a general lack of bullying, significant challenges persist. These include inadequate access to learning materials and assistive technologies, socio-economic barriers affecting educational growth, and inconsistencies in institutional support structures and may not fully address the diverse needs of these students. Socio-economic factors, including family background and financial support, play a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes. The demographic data suggest a well-represented but diverse group of students, indicating the need for tailored educational approaches.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were offered:

- There should be an increase in the availability and accessibility of learning materials and assistive technologies to support students with diverse needs.
- Governments, private organizations and individuals as philanthropists should rise to the financial needs and support of the students with special needs.
- Parents and guardians of the persons with special needs should be encouraged to release their children and wards for enrolment in the special school.
- The students with special needs should be allowed access to community resources like food banks or housing assistance that can address their basic needs to reduce variability in educational experiences.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## About the Author

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WITH DISABILITIES IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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