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Psycho-Social Adjustment of Integrated Secondary School Boys and Girls: Implications for Teacher Education Programmes

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Abstract: This study investigated the extent of psycho-social adjustment among the hearing-impaired, physically-impaired and non-impaired male and female students in Nigerian integrated junior secondary schools. The extent of equilibrium in the psycho-social adjustment between the groups of students was also determined. Data was collected using the Questionnaire on the Psycho-social Adjustment of Disabled and Normal students in Nigerian Integrated Schools. The subjects were 1295 students made up of 738 males and 557 females. There were 297 hearing-impaired, 216 physically-impaired and 782 non-impaired students. Descriptive analyses indicated probable gender influences on the psycho-social adjustment of the three groups of students. Testing the research hypotheses with one-way ANOVA ($p<0.05$) and Scheffe post-hoc analysis further indicated significant gender influences on the psycho-social adjustments of the hearing-impaired, the physically-impaired and non-impaired students groups. Some significant gender differences were also observed across the 3 groups of students. The results of this study imply the need for more special education teachers in the integrated schools and a modification in the Nigerian regular teacher education programme to include more emphasis on special education needs children. This could enable regular teachers, who may find themselves in integrated school environments, to better cope with the affective needs of their students.

Key words: Psyeho-social, boys and girls, secondary school, teacher education programm

INTRODUCTION

After about 2 decades of seeking equilibrium between the impaired and non-impaired students in Nigerian integrated schools, it has been observed that the integration practice seemed to have favoured the general society, the entire educational system and the professionals working in the system rather than the children involved. The practice has also been criticised on dumping, neglecting and exposure of children to unfair competition and discrimination since most of the regular schools designated as integrated schools were never adapted to meet up with integrated schools standards both in infrastructure and professional personnel (Obani and Visser, 1998). An area of current research interest in the integration practice has been how to improve the affective development of special needs children with the particular aim of developing in them a sense of worth, equity and meaningful living in the society, in order to bring them closer to their non-impaired peers in psycho-social experiences (Polat, 2003; FRN, 2004; Olofintoye, 2005; Ademokoya and Fasuba, 2005).

There is the need for all educators to become aware of the dimension of students affective needs in order to adopt appropriate strategies to assist them. A way of realising these needs is by determining them empirically. Traditionally in Nigeria, impairment has been surrounded by myths setting the impaired apart (Fadipe, 1982). But advancement in knowledge now favours the environmentalist approach that the adjustment of children has to be studied in relation to the environment with which they regularly interact and which influences them from time to time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The hearing-impaired and the physically-impaired were selected in this study because of their comparability with their non-impaired peers on psycho-social behaviours. Psycho-social adjustment hereby refers to the quantity of harmony experienced by the students in their personal and interpersonal behaviours. This study is on the psycho-social adjustment of the hearing-impaired, the physically impaired and the non-impaired boys and girls in Nigerian integrated secondary schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design: This study employed the descriptive design. This was to describe and compare the social, psychological and psychosocial adjustment of the hearing-impaired, the physically impaired and non-impaired in relation to gender.

Participants: The sample was composed of 1295 male and female students comprising 297 hearing impaired (166 boys and 131 girls), 216 physically-impaired (147 boys and 69 girls) and 782 non-impaired students (425 boys and 357 girls) making a total of 738 boys and 557 girls. The participants were randomly and purposively selected from eleven functional integrated secondary schools, which were also sampled randomly from seven of the 36 Nigerian states. The participants were of 21 states of origin in Nigeria.

Procedure: The researcher's Questionnaire on Psycho-social Adjustment of Nigeria Adolescents (QPANA) was used to collect data on the psycho-social adjustment of the participants. The QPANA consists of sections A, which was on personal data and section B which has 50 items measuring psycho-social adjustment, with the first 19 items measuring social adjustment while items 20-50 measured psychological adjustment.

A panel of 25 professionals from the field of special education, psychology, sociology and tests and measurement determined the face and content validities of the QPANA. Its construct validity value of 12.64 was significant at 0.05 level. The reliability co-efficient for items 1-19 covering social adjustment was 0.810, items 20-50 on psychological adjustment had 0.782, while the whole items 1-50, had a reliability co-efficient of 0.842.

As part of a larger study (Olofintoye, 2005) the researcher and some trained assistants administered the instrument on the participants in their schools. The social and psychological adjustments of the students were determined independently of each other before merging them as psycho-social adjustment. The semi-inter-quartile range spread the sample into three adjustments levels of high, moderate and low. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Scheffe post-hoc analysis were used to test for possible significant differences in the students' adjustment.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows that majority of the integrated school students were psycho-socially adjusted, since most of them fell into the moderate and high levels of social, psychological and psycho-social adjustment. The percentages suggest some probable gender differences and similarity in the adjustment of the impaired and non-impaired students.

The groups of students differed significantly in their social, psychological and psycho-social adjustments as shown on Table 2. The post-hoc analysis on Table 3 reveals the areas of differences.

The hearing-impaired boys were significantly more in social adjustment than their girls and the hearing girls. Other groups did not differ socially. Significant differences were recorded in psychological adjustment of hearing-impaired boys and hearing boys, hearing-impaired girls and hearing boys, hearing-impaired and hearing-impaired girls and hearing girls and hearing-impaired boys. The mean scored showed the hearing students to be more adjusted.

Significant sex influences existed in the psycho-social adjustments of the hearing impaired boys and hearing girls; hearing-impaired girls and hearing boys, hearing girls and hearing-impaired girls and hearing boys and hearing-impaired boys. This gender influence favours the hearing as indicated by their higher mean scores.

The boys and girls in Table 4 differed significantly in their social, psychological and psycho-social

Table 1: The psycho-social adjustment of impaired and non-impaired students by sex

		Social adjustment				Psychological adjustment				Psycho-social adjustment			
		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
Groups of students	Adjustment levels	F	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hearing-impaired	High	87	52.4	46	35.1	17	10.2	15	11.5	21	12.7	11	8.4
N = 297	Moderate	65	39.2	80	61.1	117	70.5	100	76.5	120	72.3	106	80.9
	Low	14	8.4	5	3.8	32	19.3	16	12.2	25	15.1	14	10.7
	N	166		131		166		131		166		131	
Physically-	High	43	29.3	22	31.9	23	15.6	12	17.4	26	17.7	9	13.0
impaired N = 216	Moderate	100	68.00	42	60.9	114	77.6	48	69.6	117	79.6	57	82.6
	Low	4	2.7	5	7.2	10	6.8	9	13.0	4	2.7	3	4.4
	N	147		69		147		69		147		69	
Non-impaired	High	214	50.4	187	52.4	117	27.5	91	25.5	249	58.6	68	19.0
students N = 782	Moderate	187	44.00	144	4.3	289	68.0	259	72.5	164	38.6	268	75.1
	Low	24	5.6	26	7.3	19	4.5	7	2.0	12	2.8	21	5.9
	N	425		357		425		357		425		357	
All student	High	200	27.1	233	41.8	149	20.2	113	20.3	428	58.0	42	7.5
N = 1295	Moderate	518	70.2	301	54.0	556	75.3	415	74.5	298	40.4	479	86.0
	Low	20	2.7	23	4.2	33	4.3	29	5.2	12	1.6	36	6.5
	N	738		557		738		557		738		557	

Table 2: The influence of sex on the psycho-social adjustment of the hearing- impaired and hearing students

Sources of Variation	SSbg	df	MSbg	SSwg	df	MSwg	F_c
Social Adjustment	297.897	3	99.299	14174.757	1075	13.186	7.531**
Psychological Adjustment	1807.762	3	602.587	17826.551	1075	16.583	36.338**
Psycho-social Adjustment	1192.609	3	397.536	266650.334	1075	24.791	16.036**

**Significant, $p<0.05$ F-table = 2.60

Table 3: Location on gender influence on the psycho-social adjustment of the hearing-impaired and hearing students

Dependent variable	Group of students	$\bar{X}$	HIB	HIG	HB	HG
Social	Hearing-impaired Boys (HIB)	13.90		*		*
Adjustment	Hearing-impaired Girls (HIG)	12.60				
	Hearing Boys (HB)	13.04				
	Hearing Girls (HG)	12.34				
Psychological	Hearing-impaired Boys (HIB)	12.45			*	*
Adjustment	Hearing-impaired Girls (HIG)	18.29			*	*
	Hearing Boys (HB)	20.66				
	Hearing Girls (HG)	20.70				
Psycho-social	Hearing-impaired Boys (HIB)	31.70				*
Adjustment	Hearing-impaired Girls (HIG)	30.89				*
	Hearing Boys (HB)	33.70	*			
	Hearing Girls (HG)	33.04		*		

*Significant differences at 0.05

Table 4: Gender Differences in the Psycho-social Adjustment of the Physically-impaired and Non-impaired Students

Sources of variation	SSbg	df	MSbg	SSwg	df	MSwg	F_c
Social adjustment	301.045	3	100.348	12724.246	994	12.801	7.839**
Psychological adjustment	974.756	3	324.919	15764.913	994	15.860	20.487**
Psycho-social adjustment	403.426	3	134.975	23354.102	994	23.495	5.724**

**Significant, $p<0.05$, F-table = 2.60

Table 5: Location of gender influence on the psycho-social adjustment of the physically-impaired and non-impaired students

Dependent variable	Group of students	$\bar{X}$	PIB	PIG	NB	NG
Social	Physically-impaired Boys (PIB)	13.55				*
Adjustment	Physically-impaired Girls (PIG)	14.22				*
	Non-impaired Male (NB)	13.04				
	Non-impaired Girls (NG)	12.34				
Psychological	Physically-impaired Boys (PIB)	18.37			*	*
Adjustment	Physically-impaired Girls (PIG)	18.10			*	*
	Non-impaired Boys (NB)	20.66				
	Non-impaired Girls (NG)	20.70				
Psycho-social	Physically-impaired Boys (PIB)	31.92			*	
Adjustment	Physically-impaired Girls (PIG)	32.32				
	Normal Boys (NB)	33.70				
	Normal Girls (NG)	33.04				

*Significant difference $p<0.05$

Table 6: Gender differences in the psycho-social adjustment of the physically-impaired and the hearing-impaired

Sources of variation	SSbg	df	MSbg	SSwg	Df	MSwg	F_c
Social adjustment	167.467	3	55.822	5954.724	509	11.699	4.772**
Psychological adjustment	81.331	3	27.110	9398.545	509	18.465	1.468*
Psycho-social adjustment	123.650	3	41.217	12924.245	509	25.391	1.623*

**Significant, $p<0.05$ * = Not Significant, $p>0.05$ F-Table = 2.60

adjustments. The pairs with the significant differences are revealed by the result of the post-hoc analysis on Table 5.

The post-hoc analysis on Table 5 showed that physically-impaired boys and non-impaired girls and physically-impaired girls and non-impaired girls differed significantly in social adjustment. The mean scores show that physically-impaired students had better social adjustment. Other pairs did not differ in social adjustment on the basis of gender.

Significant differences in psychological adjustment were observed between the: Physically-impaired boys and non-impaired boys; physically-impaired boys and non-impaired girls; physically-impaired girls and non-impaired boys and physically-impaired girls and non-impaired girls. With regard to psycho-social adjustment, only the physically-impaired boys and the non-impaired boys differed significantly. The non-impaired were better in psychological and psycho-social adjustments as indicated by their mean scores.

Table 6 revealed significant gender difference only in the social adjustment of the groups. The direction of the social adjustment difference is indicated by the Post-hoc analysis on Table 7.

Table 7: Location of gender influence on the social adjustment of the hearing-impaired and physically-impaired

Dependent variable	Group of students	$\bar{X}$	PIB	PIG	MHI	HIG
Social	Physically-impaired Boys (PIB)	13.55				
Adjustment	Physically-impaired Girls (PIG)	14.22				
	Hearing-impaired Boys (HIB)	13.90				*
	Hearing-impaired Girls (HIG)	12.60		*		

*Significant difference $p<0.05$

Table 7 revealed that physically-impaired girls were significantly more adjusted than hearing-impaired girls. Also, hearing-impaired boys were more adjusted than hearing-impaired girls as evidenced by their mean scores.

DISCUSSION

The result revealed some significant gender differences between the non-impaired, hearing-impaired and physically-impaired students in social, psychological and psycho-social adjustments. The better social adjustment of hearing-impaired boys over hearing and hearing girls in this report contradicts most of the existing literature. Previous research evidences suggest significant influence of gender on social adjustment with girls appearing to be better adjusted (e.g.; Meadow, 1980; Sinkkonen, 1994). This could be attributed to girls' superior social sensitivity, which could have reduced their sense of social satisfaction.

The better social adjustment of boys with impairment in this study also negates those reports that disability relegates its victims to the minority group whose members contend with the problems of relationships and dependency (Obani and Visser, 1998; Owuamanam and Owuamanam, 2004). This implies that it is not disability that creates differences in the adjustment of non-impaired and impaired adolescents but that other environmental and personal factors might be responsible.

Sex did not differentiate between some groups of the non-impaired and the impaired in this study. This supports the argument in the Nigerian National Policy on Education that a meaningful amount of similarity could be expected in the in-school experiences of students with impairment and the non-impaired when integrated, since, as humans, the impaired does not really differ from the non-impaired persons except in the area of impairment.

The physically-impaired girls were significantly better in social adjustment than the non-impaired and hearing-impaired females. This could be due to the communication barrier of the hearing-impaired since social adjustment is related to verbal ability in which the physically-impaired has an advantage over the hearing-impaired. Also, that the physically impaired girls in this study were more socially adjusted than the non-impaired girls could be that the physically-impaired have accepted their disability and were willingly interacting with their environment without much reservation, unlike the non-impaired girls who might be too selective.

This study shows that non-impaired girls and boys were better than their impaired colleagues in psychological adjustment. These girls' better psychological adjustment agrees with the works of Meadow (1980), Sinkkonen (1994) and Polat (2003). The admiration of the girls by their male counterparts might have boosted their ego. This result, however, contradicts that of Akinpelu (1998), who reported boys' better self-concept among Nigerian deaf students.

On the overall psycho-social adjustment, the non-impaired, particularly boys, were significantly better than the hearing-impaired and physically impaired. The results on gender influences support some previous findings (Barton, 1995 and Atinwo, 1996) that when the impaired and non-impaired are united, the non-impaired unusually outwits the impaired in general adjustment patterns and that sex usually influence such differences. This is probably because the impaired are systematically viewed as others. This may elicit in impaired boys and girls a defeating psycho-social attitude of inferiority complex. Also, the cultural stereotype in Nigeria that boys are first class citizens could have contributed immensely to the non-impaired boys' superior psycho-social adjustment. Again, that the hearing girls were significantly better than the hearing-impaired boys and girls could also be cultural that is, even though the female child is regarded as a second class citizen, she would still be preferred to a boy with disability.

The overall psycho-social experiences of some groups of the students were however, relatively similar on gender basis as no significant differences were recorded between them. Hence, the purpose of integration is justified.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that most of the Nigerian integrated school students were psycho-socially adjusted. It is also clear that although some equilibrium has been achieved, evidence of gender differences in adjustment still exist among and between the groups of students. It is therefore recommended that the integration programme should continue in Nigeria.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following implications are inferred for better teacher education programmes in Nigeria.

- There is the need to train more special education teachers in Nigeria to handle students with disabilities.
- The regular teacher education programme should be modified to include more emphasis on special education needs children to enable them cope better with the needs of exceptional children.
- Regular in-service training should be organised for the teachers who are involved in the care of exceptional children in integrated schools.
- Teacher education programmes should continue to debunk cultural attitudes towards disability to enable teachers transmit scientific attitudes in their schools.
- Diploma courses on special education should be organised for interested regular in-service teachers.
- More school counsellors should be posted to integrated schools to assist exceptional students cope better with their affective needs.
- Teachers in training should be sensitised on the psycho-social needs of children.
- Special education courses should prepare teachers to handle exceptional students' psychological concerns.

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