EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY AND GENDERED DISABILITY IN NIGERIAN COMMUNITY: WHAT GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS AND MASS COMMUNICATORS MUST DO FOR CONCERNED PUPILS?

Bamidele Chika Agbakuribe[1]
University of Abuja

Emmanuelar Onyinyechi Agbakuribe [2]
Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria and a Programmes Department, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Abuja, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT: *This research explored educational inequality among male and female disabled pupils in Southern Nigeria. Situating the literature on special, mainstream and inclusive education, various dynamics that intersect with their schooling were examined. Reviewing how guidance counsellors and mass communicators could synergise and sensitise the community in order to boost educational access for disabled people, phenomenological research with semi-structured interviews were applied. Twelve male and female mainstream secondary school pupils who participated in special pre-secondary education volunteered information on their school experiences. After a thematic content analysis of data, these findings were made. The pupils understand the dynamics that interplay with their education. Distant-located special pre-secondary schooling and mono-gender mainstream secondary education expose them to exclusion. Mature ones are mostly educated alongside children. Education remains a lone progression option for adult visually-impaired primary school leavers. Huge knowledge gaps exist among professionals on how best to support them. They are not adequately involved in their service progressions. Gender is not responsible for educational inequality in disability, but overprotection of disabled females. However, as suitable disability and inclusion knowledge deficits encumbered their access to education, a guidance counselling cum mass communication arranged psychosocial reorientation radio programmes was recommended as a panacea for change.*

KEYWORDS: educational inequality, gendered disability, guidance counsellors, mass communicators, Nigerian community

INTRODUCTION

Background
Education can be described as an excellent transformation instrument given its efficacy in mitigating poverty and child labour. Despite being anchored on the principle of fundamental human rights, research evidence on its accessibility for diverse learners is limited.

Although inclusion is universally endorsed as United Nations' global strategy that guarantees educational equality for disabled people (Jacob and Olisaemeka, 2016*)*, its application in countries vary from Article 18 of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization position on the subject. This document emphasises that: "Educational policies at

all levels, from the national to the local, should stipulate that a child with a disability should attend the neighbourhood school…" (p. 17; UNESCO, 1994 in Ajuwon, 2012). Most educational institutions for disabled people are, however, urban-sited (Charema, 2005). Since Nigeria has world's largest number of out-of-school children, with 60% identified as girls (Global Citizens, 2018), there is need to ascertain how this affects disabled people therein.

Indeed, the country acknowledges equal educational opportunities by declaring in its National Policy on Education 'NPE, 1977, 1981, 2004 and 2008' that disabled persons should study in non-segregated schools alongside their "non-disabled" counterparts (Brydges and Mkandawire, 2017). Further to its ratification of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 alongside the 2010 Optional Protocol (Umeh and Adeola, 2013), it then enacted Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities Prohibition Act '2018' (Ewang, 2019). But as education of disabled persons still emits dearth of: requisite support staff; responsive and apt environment; appropriate and adequate teaching cum learning facilities, such as adapted equipment and materials; curriculum modification; necessary pedagogical knowhow; training and retraining of teaching and non-teaching staff; timely identification of individuals emitting signs and symptoms of impairments; positive attitude; accurate census of disabled people; and inclusion consciousness among the general public *(*Hanafi, 2018 and Akanji, 2009)*,* the nation's educational strategy is labelled a "mere rhetoric" (Oladele, Ogunwale and Dafwat, 2016).

As a matter of fact, extant research often dwell on secondary barriers in education by reporting paucities without attention to their primary causes. Whilst one separate demography-based analysis concludes that gender disparity impede educational parity among disabled males and females given increased school enrolment of the former (Obi, 2007), there is need for further studies. One, with demography alone, people's experiences cannot be heard. Consequently, disenfranchisement of the target population can only produce author-posited recommendations which are not empirical. To generate a richer data, another research approach is required. Creswell, 2014), for example, has theorised that qualitative research techniques explore respondents' independent opinions farther than quantitative approaches would. To elicit various covert insights that result in gender disparity and educational inequality among disabled people, qualitative research design is applied alongside review of related literature.

Gender Inequality
Higher ranking of one gender over the other continues to encourage power differential amid sexes in many societies. If the male has more power, he is likely to dominate or control the female in any correlation (Jenkins, 2000). While the concept of boyhood developed in eighteenth century before girlhood, when male children played among themselves and collectively received education in skills they required for adulthood (Aries, 2015), it later evolved from philosophy to hegemony.

Sibani (2017), notes that social encouragement of masculinity supremacy over femininity engenders mindsets that transmit victimisation of women from childhood to adulthood. Following specious belief that African men cannot make mistakes, women are either neglected or divorced for not meeting up with their husbands' preferences. Because boys have a tendency to be more revered in families and communities, they are prepared for responsibilities,

achievements and self-sufficiency unlike girls who are usually trained for farming and home-making. This is attributed to the latter's exit after marriage (Abang-Wushishi, 2004 in Obi, 2007). With this inequality, girls are left without education and life opportunities.

Even when numerous global pacts are supporting elimination of discrimination against women, girls continue to experience deprivations in many communities. They are likely the first to be withdrawn from school by families under pecuniary pressure. If typecasts and social processes only prepare girls for domestic responsibilities and becoming good housewives, at the expense of education which can make them useful to themselves and the society, such would have a multidimensional impact on those of them who are disabled. Given the description of disabled individuals as the most disadvantaged group in all societies (Hegarty & Alur in Charema, 2005), there is a need to ascertain how their education is affected by gender.?

Disabled Girls' Education
Disabled women are thought not to be usually married with families and paid jobs like their male counterparts. Buttressing this, Davies is cited as stating that ladies are the more nurturing sex and they may be less hesitant to accept date from disabled men than non-disabled men would do for disabled girls (Obi, 2007). This is also recognised as why disabled boys are more readily identified for education and self-sufficiency.

Reiterating that: "women with disabilities are likely to have received less education than both non-disabled women and men with disabilities. Women with disabilities are five times as likely as women without disabilities to have less than eight years of formal education; 17.4 percent of all women with disabilities have less than eight years of formal education as compared to 3.5 percent of non-disabled women. Only 16 percent of all women with disabilities are likely to have any college education compared to 31 percent of non-disabled women and 28 percent of men with disabilities." Obi (2007), further reveals that disabled boys count for 51% of all learners in primary and secondary schools, up to 75% in special education classes, and less than 10% of the total school age children.

Judging from the above statistics, it becomes glaring that disabled girls are educationally underrepresented. However, the reasons remain unknown. Whereas pupils' gender and education has been studied in Nigeria (Maduagwu, Carew, Fajonyomi, and Maduagwu, 2014) without identifying with disabled samples, it is hereby deemed germane to explore their inclusion in schools.

Inclusive Education for disabled people of Nigerian Community
Inclusive education can be described as an educational paradigm which possesses the capacity To accomplish school accessibility, equality, and quality for all; regardless of differences or circumstances. Obi and Ashi (2016), are of the view that inclusive education is a system where both disabled and non-disabled children are educated together in one classroom with modifications in physical structures, equipment and methods that suit their conditions. Although special and mainstream schools accommodate disabled learners, their availability and suitability can be contested, especially when they differ from inclusion which educates disabled learners in physical proximity to their age peers amid substantial need attention.

If inclusion provides opportunities for all disabled people to participate as fully as possible in their family, social, educational, occupational, recreational, and commercial activities that characterize every society (Oke, 2006), unique educational settings like special and mainstream schools which take them away from these community involvements cannot be counted as inclusive. Simply put, while attendance to these schools should be a matter of decision and not compulsion, regular or general education ought to be readily accessible with necessary adjustments for diverse learners. Contrarywise, inclusion appears not to be properly understood and adopted towards addressing the lives and needs of disabled children in various Nigerian communities.

With high number of disabled people living in rural areas of developing countries, where there training institutions are rarely found (Charema, 2005), they must relocate to city boarding schools to be educated. From the experience of one of the researcher's, this excludes them from family, peer group, and community corelations. Another reason for their relocation is because mainstream secondary schools are not often gender-sensitive or coeducational. Hence, exposing them to forfeiture of education. For personal-social, educational, and vocational equilibrium to be attained in the lives of disabled people and across humanity, meticulous arrangements that could make them feasible are required.

Meticulous Steps for Educational equality
Available literature show that girls are found to be less identified for education than boys. For the disabled ones, their circumstances might not be better. Oliver (1990), notes that disability is not about the impairment, but the society which disables individuals with impairments by ways of discrimination and exclusion (Watson, 2012). To change psychological and social misconceptions of femininity within disability, we proposed that involvements of psychosocial re-engineering mavens like guidance counsellors and mass communicators who influence people's opinions over issues can be helpful.

Counselling is seen as a practical step for expediating educational equality. Though it is defined as a professional assistance given to an individual or group of individuals who are either able or disabled, it is usually provided to help recipients understand conflicting areas of their lives better, detect alternative solution to problems, and live satisfactorily (Okonkwo, Fajonyomi, Omotosho, Esere and Olawuyi, 2017). Whilst they reiterate that one of the aims of counselling is to support individuals towards clearing every thwarting condition so that they could achieve their life goals and contribute to self and the society, it has become needful to emphasise that without guidance (proactive/preventative measure), counselling (reactive/curative mediation) would be partial. Egenti (2018), puts forward that guidance plays a vital role in preventing educational, personal, social, mental and other similar problems.

Certainly, guidance and counselling can obtain information about individuals and organisations that efficiently diagnose, identify, and support disabled learners; locate educational programmes that are specially designed for them; inform them of novel scientific and technological discoveries that can help them meet their special needs; and win positive acceptance and empathic understanding of the school community for them (Bulus, 2007). For attitudinal barriers that result in educational inequality of the group to give way, the community, where school constituents and educational authorities inhabit must be reoriented .

Indeed, the declared task may be difficult for the guidance counsellor to accomplish autonomously given the ethics of the career. This is because one of the things "helping profession" trainees are told during coaching is that beneficiaries of their services should participate out of volition and not coercion. This means that clients or counsellees must volunteer to access any guidance service and not to be coerced towards benefiting from such. To avoid contradiction of tenets, it would be worthwhile for the guidance counsellor to work in synergy with the mass media in order to reach the unreached and unwilling via a recognised extensive platform.

Agbakuribe (2018), insists that radio is the best medium with which both urban and rural populace can be appropriately and adequately reached with information. Adding that the device is not only portable, but equally accessible, the scholar clarifies that through radio broadcasts, minds of both educated and uneducated folks can be disabused from repugnant beliefs and practices. As Agbakuribe states, this is possible as: many radio stations including the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) now transmit in several dialects; electricity cannot pose a barrier as radio can be powered with battery which enable signals in interior villages and farms; and radio stations can also be accessed using mobile phones.

Mass communication is suggested in this context because it is multifaceted and broader than usual media activities. For Debanjan (2010), beyond news, advert and entertainment, mass communication cuts across diverse media, modes of communication, genres of text or artifact, production or reception situations, or any question of actual communication. Since Nigerian gender relations is characterized by imbalances which daunt women (Okunna, 2002), apposite mass communication propagated guidance counselling programmes can desensitise the public from such repugnant conducts. Little wonder Endong and Obonganwan (2015), have recommended that a more promising approach to the eradication of women stereotyping and misrepresentations in Nigeria should begin from revolutionary social changes in favour of the gender's emancipation; starting from families, education, religion, law and other social status determinants.

Arguing that guidance and counselling is that revolutionary social change mechanism which has the capacity to work in favour of women, we advise that a broadcast synergy between its practitioners and mass communicators would boost equal educational opportunities for all genders.

Purpose of the Study

This research aims to ascertain dynamics of educational inequality among male and female disabled Nigerians. It also seeks to put forward a workable panacea for any concern that could be identified from study participants' responses to the research question.

Research question

What do disabled Nigerian males and females encounter when accessing education?

METHODOLOGY

Design
This work is predicated on qualitative research approach. Adopting A phenomenological design, a small-scale study was used for the purposes of prioritising the views of the research participants and providing insights into their personal experiences. The procedure is deemed useful because it would be difficult to obtain rich data with a large range survey.

Population
The study population consists of Nigerian disabled males and females. Their perceptions were sought in order to find out the extent to which they are able to access education.

Sample
Purposive and Snowball measures were applied in identifying the participants and drawing an appropriate sample for the study. It must, however, be noted that age stratification was not taken into cognizance during sampling as some of the study participants' age were incongruent with the stipulation for the classes they occupied. This age discrepancy could equally be either as a result of belated awareness of training opportunities for disabled persons or later decision to pursue education given sudden onset of disability. Further, since disabled Nigerian learners are mostly placed in special pre-secondary education before mainstream post-primary school attendance, it was then decided that their opinions would be helpful in providing a rich account of their personal experiences of navigating across these stages of learning. Previous correlations with some members of the group were really helpful in providing access to some of their counterparts whom it would have otherwise been unfeasible to get hold of. With their advice and support, a number of disabled students' association Executive Officers were reached in 2019 for contacts of their members who would like to participate in the study. Having sought their consents to voluntary participation, assuring them of confidentiality, as well as emphasising on their liberty to withdraw from the study at any point should they become uncomfortable, twelve (12) of them willingly released their mobile phone numbers. This made it possible for this study to be conducted in 2020. The 12 volunteer participants were made up of 10 male and 2 females from Southern Nigeria (South-East and South-South) who transitioned from special primary school to mainstream secondary learning environments.

Instrumentation
In keeping with Cresswell (2014), semi-structured interview was used towards understanding common experiences and related dynamics that interfere with the participants' educational access through in-depth interviews. These discussions were carried out in English language and audio-recorded on the phone using assigned names.

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis
Participants were asked if they would want to be sent the interview form in their individually preferred or accessible format via the Post Office. They, however, indicated that the document be sent using short message service (SMS), as it is more convenient for them to access it through voice-over. This move was made to provide them enough time to read through the form and seek any clarification in case they require further information. Participants' freedom to withdraw their consents or ignore any question they find awkward to answer during the

interview were clearly emphasised on the procedure as well. Using the shared interview guide, pupils' experiences in accessing education; various hurdles they had and were still going through; as well as individual thoughts about their primary and secondary schooling were elicited from them.

After data collection, the analysis was manually and thematically conducted following review of the interview transcripts. Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013), suggest that in order to identify recurring responses and common themes through a thematic content analysis technique, Frequent answers should be tallied as to allow for proper consideration, filtration and coding of the data. Having done this, drawing major quotes from the thematically categorised transcripts, it then followed that three predominant themes emerged. These pointers to the research findings include: dynamics of educational inequality in special and mainstream schools; cultural understanding of disability; and insights on hierarchy of gender in disability.

RESULT

The research findings reveal the difficulties and differing encounters of disabled pupils in South-East and South-South Nigeria. Judging from their narratives on the nature of educational deliveries that are available to them, it is noticeable that the group lives through exploitation in accessing education. To substantiate this claim without mentioning names of locations, institutions and individuals, but using pseudonyms, the study findings are conveyed through the following themes and participants' direct quotations.

Dynamics of Educational Inequality in Disability Inclusion
The pupils were not ignorant of several factors that influence their access to both special and mainstream education. While they noted that studying in non-segregated learning environment would provide them with improved social and educational integration for full community participation, some of them expressed that if they had their ways, they would not be in such secondary schools because of their age. Godwin, a first-year visually impaired pupil, for example, commented that
"I came to school late because my family didn't know that a blind person can go to school. When I was in the special school, I learned with many people who were of my age. But now that I am here, I am more than 25 years old, and it is very hard for me to feel free in the same classroom with children of 11 and 13 years. To be honest, I will be happy if I am asked to do my education in a different type of school than Golden Boys' High School, where I will not be feeling that I am learning with small children or laughed at by them when I do not do well." (Both study participant's name and that of school not real).
Whilst the students expressed that their social contact with learners and teachers of mainstream schools who are not disabled is a great source of exposure, they, however, contended that had they been allowed to study in regular schools of their localities, their social interaction and participation with learners from their families and communities would have been more courteous. One of the participants, Titus, a fifth-year pupil said:
"Although few of our pupils who are not disabled are very good to us, play with us and also help us, there are many who do not treat us well. Those ones who do not like us do not even want to come near us or help us."

Concerns were also expressed about education of the learners due to locations of both mainstream and special schools. A male pupil in year three, Paul asserted that:

"If not for someone in my village who helped to sponsor my education when I was in special primary school, I will not be here by now. My father said that he did not have the money to send me to study in Ziggy state, where they have special nursery/primary school for disabled people because it is very far from our place."

A second-year female pupil, Mama further disclosed that:

"True, there are mainstream secondary schools in my state, but the nearest one is for boys. So instead of going far to my state capital, where the girls mainstream school is, I chose the nearest one in Binger state" (pseudonyms).

Noticeably, expressions "far and know" were continuously repeated in the statements of both male and female pupils who referred to their experiences of accessing special schools, as well as mainstream educational settings. To start with, the whole visually impaired participants who featured in the research remarked that they had to travel far from their communities to live within their school environments in order to access both special and mainstream education due to scarcity of designated nursery, primary and secondary schools for visually impaired learners in their neighbourhoods. Particularly, A sixth-year pupil, White, who was about rounding off his secondary education said:

"I was already in five before I lost my sight. I really wanted to go back and finish my education in my former village school after learning Typing, and Braille reading and writing in a faraway special school where I lived for two years. But my former principal said that if we had a special school in our area, he will be glad to work with them to help me as him and his teachers do not know how to train blind students. He then said as far distance has made it impossible, I should go to a mainstream school, where I can get help, rather than coming back to regular school. He didn't know that there is no difference between my current school and the former one; except that we have a special teacher but I don't really need her help because of my ability to type."

Consequently, apart from the remark that those who can type in mainstream secondary school do not really need the support of their special teacher depicting that the services of such specialists are not well-maximised in mainstream schools, the word "know" as expressed by the pupils also reveals that there is little or no knowledge about disability and its nuances among many communities and their educators. Another research participant cited:

"I sat for one external examination last year. When I was being guided to the exam room, I overheard one invigilator whisper to another that they do not know what to do for me in the exam." (Stella). Unmistakably, if educators who should know better are unaware of how to make learning readily accessible for disabled learners, educational inequality of the group may be cultural.

Cultural Understanding of Disability

Cultural understanding of disabilities in communities can be described as an underlying factor when it comes to determining how disabled individuals are treated in any given society. Quite a lot of the research participants mentioned that they experience discrimination within their vicinities and special cum mainstream school communities. Mark, a pupil who experiences seizure disorder, for example, recounted how his younger brother's friend stopped visiting their home. He cites:

"My younger brother's friend, earlier told him that he stopped coming to our house because he heard that since he is not our biological brother, he will be infected with my kind of disability

if he continues visiting our home. But he later changed his mind when he heard that I am living in the same dormitory with other students who are not disabled in our school."
One other pupil, said:
"My classmate who use to help me in school, on one occasion, informed me that he will no longer help because his parents have asked him to stay away from me due to his Guardian-teacher's advice. When I asked why? He said he didn't know. But afterwards, one of his friend who later decided to be helping me, told me that the boy was told that his brilliance will be transferred to me if he continues to help." Franc noted.

Leaving disabled learners in mainstream schools without sufficient services and support could put excessive burdens on the school community; thus, instigating neglect. Observably, cultural misconceptions might not be distant from the pitiable conditions in which they are educated. Talking about educational delivery, Ben, a physically challenged pupil specified that:
"The problem I have with my legs has made it difficult for me to climb stairs. Unfortunately, I must do so with the help of my mates everyday I am in school because I have no option." In the same vein, Godwin expressed dissatisfaction with the kind of education they are being provided. In his words:
"We are on our own, if you continue to wait for the government to provide your school needs, you may wait for 100 years. Whatever you need and can't provide it, just forget about it and manage to go on with your studies any way you can." The pupil pointed out. By the same token, the participants' avowals on unfriendly attitudes of both teaching and non-teaching staff of their schools and staff of their states' education ministries affirmed that little support was in place for them.

Disabled pupils and their families/communities should rly on education authorities for disability and support needs consciousness, but such service seems to be unobtainable. Really, without guidance, the ubiquitous ignorance and cultural stereotypes that exclude these individuals may never be eliminated. According to one pupil,
"At my former school, a little before the holiday, I was worried that I might not be returning to school next term as my mother was finding it hard to take care of my school needs. After speaking to my special teacher about it, she said that she cannot help. I then went to the Ministry of Education to speak to the one in charge of disables(sic) about my problem during the holiday, but was not allowed to meet the person. After the staff insisted that I must say why I came and the school I am coming from, I told them. They informed my special teacher about the visit. When the school resumed and I got back to school, the special teacher shouted at me. She said before her colleagues and my classmates, why are you too forward, don't you know you are a girl?" Stella, a physically challenged pupil illustrated. This depicts underperformances of guidance and counselling in schools. If the services were active, they would have known how and where to turn for help. Again, lack of orientation could bring about disabled learners being differently perceived and unpleasantly treated as in the case of the female study participants. Though social negative attitudes towards disabled individuals is prevalent in Nigeria, the sway appears to be more on female members of the group.

Gender Inequality in Disability
Unevenness of school enrolment and encouragement for empowerment amongst male and female disabled individuals is blatant. Further to majority of the study participants identifying

themselves as males, accounts of the females amongst them exhibited their passion for education.

The girls maintained that despite all discouragements, they took the bull by the horn and found their ways to school. In her words, Mama, a visually impaired pupil elucidated:

"My family was happy for me to go to school, but they were afraid that it will be dangerous for them to leave a disabled girl to be outside the family all on her own. My father said that he will not allow me to leave our home, he would have done that if I were a boy. He also said, what if somebody secretly does something to you can you know the person? My mother told me that her main worry was that my cloths might get stained without me knowing and sighted people will be laughing at me. But I insisted that I must go to school. My dream came true when I established contact with a blind girl who reads bible in our church. I pleaded with her to speak with my parents after which she informed them that they are taught many things in school, including how to be independent. She also told them that disabled girls can study to any level and become professionals like everyone. This was how my parents agreed to send me to school." Mama said.

Family opinions about disabled girls' inability to cope in school and low number of female participants in this study might not really infer hierarchy of gender in disability, but a culture that perceives disabled girls as fragile because of their impairments. It is noteworthy that as girls, they are equally affected by generic traditional male hegemony which exclude females in entirety. Stella also narrated how she overcame the ordeal of not receiving assistance from her community support fund for indigent students. As she puts it:

"I was disappointed when the committee members of my community support fund, who were aware of my family background didn't find me eligible for the support. They said the scholarship was meant for boys who will graduate, get a job and contribute money for sponsoring the younger ones, not girls who will be married elsewhere. For that reason, I put more effort in learning how to play musical instruments. I am now playing for my church, and they gave me scholarship."

Undoubtedly, the girls' tales have demonstrated huge enthusiasm and optimism for education which may extinguish without appropriate information.

DISCUSSION

Disability may include functional impairments with diverse experiences. But it is outside the foci of this research to consider whether severity of disability impedes educational equality. Noticeably, during data collection, majority of the mainstream secondary school study participants identified for the research were those with physical and visual impairments. Perhaps, relevant authorities do not recognise their impairments as disabilities, they are not declaring it out of ignorance, they are hiding it due to associated stigma, or educational admission processes discriminate rather than accommodate them.

Contrary to misreading that mainstream is inclusive, our findings clearly evince that it does not guarantee equal educational opportunities. Evidently, mature disabled learners and children study together in both special and mainstream schools. This meant that after special primary education, progression opportunities for visually impaired adults among them are limited. It appears that no other training option is available for them apart from mainstream post-primary education. Aside struggling for adjustments in such school amidst age, interest or capability

variations, thrusts of inclusion seem unattained. Notably, regular schools with inclusive orientation are "the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all." (UNESCO, 1994, p. IX in Ajuwon, 2012).

Different from the view that it is better to have all children engaged in a common educational experience that will enable them learn and develop to the best of their abilities, regardless of where that may be (Warnock, 2005), we also found that disabled pupils are neither included in special nor mainstream schools. This is apparent as these unique but distant settings separate them from early family nurture, peer engagements, and community involvements. Had they been allowed to express how they wish to be educated, relevant officials that support them could do so within regular settings. This can be done by adapting neighbourhood schools to meet their individual needs rather than adapting them for education anywhere and anyhow. Frederickson and Cline (2009) delimit key educational stakeholders to children, parents and schools. Inversely, adding the community 'custodian of both parents, school constituents, and educational officials' would be effective in eliminating some sociocultural beliefs that reinforce educational inequality.

Disability can be correlated with evil, and the desire to avoid anything that is associated with evil, determines how affected persons may be treated by society. Stating this, Munyi (2012), continues that most social negative attitudes against disabled people are mere misconceptions that stem from lack of proper understanding of disabilities and how they affect functioning. Truly, re-emergence of the term 'know' in the interview substantiates knowledge gap on disability and possible reasons for its misconstruction.

As educational equality is commonly associated with removal of barriers that impede access to learning, this research extended its focus above material deficits to negative attitude that constitute them. Mba (1995) in Charema (2005), states that education providers speciously believe that: needs of people who are not disabled (the majority) ought to be first met before those of disabled persons (minority); it is a waste of scarce resources to expend funds for disability related services; and disability services and supports are very expensive to provide, especially when they are without any return. Relying on absolute peer and teacher support due to these negligence which makes them seem burdensome, and possibly shunned by some mates and school personnel, financial difficulties also get in the way of their studies.

Research indicate that the cost of educating one disabled person in a non-segregated school is so huge that it is equal to that of five persons who are not disabled (Obi and Ashi, 2016). From the accounts of the study participants, the kind of supports and services they expect from the government were not forthcoming. This meant that their families are anticipated to take on full responsibilities of their education, with student from indigent homes suffering the most.

Another attention-seeking area is gender. As evinced by this study, the sample was largely dominated by male pupils. This imbalance could either be hinting at less female members of the group accessing education or their experience of constraints which compel them to dropout of school. Contrary to insinuations that unlike the boys, very low number of girls receive education because they are being suppressed by African and Nigerian cultures which esteem

males than females (Sibani, 2017; Obi, 2007 and Okunna, 2002), an opposing finding has been registered by this work which, particularly, has to do with disabled girls.

Families do not value boys more than girls. The latter are, in fact, overprotected that it is hard for them to be sent out for studies. This is propelled by concerns that girls might be more prone to abuse than boys. Whilst it purports gender ranking in disability, it might not infer neglect, but reaction to an unproven cultural understanding that men are more thick-skinned than the ladies.

Given interview narratives that mindsets were changed on recognition that disability is not infectious, and disabled girls can be independent and educated, a guidance counselling cum mass communication psychosocial re-orientation programme is capable of making farther difference by encouraging parents of disabled girls to send them to school.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored what male and female disabled pupils of South-East and South-South Nigeria experience while accessing education. The pupils understand the institutional, cultural, gender and systemic dynamics that interplay with their admission and accommodation in schools; with the following lessons learnt.

Special pre-secondary schools remain basic centres for educating disabled children in the country. Despite their great benefit to severely-disabled individuals or others who willingly decide to study therein, it would be an act of exclusion to debar those who are able to learn in non-segregated settings from doing so. However, upon moving onto mainstream post-primary schools, the group is exposed to resource and infrastructure shortages alongside other discriminations which are barely mentioned in research.

This study has, indeed, established that both special/segregated and mainstream/integrated schools do not guarantee educational equality for disabled people as they are not located in all communities of the country. Hence, disadvantageous to those living in outlying localities. Additionally, many designated secondary schools for the group are mono-gender or non-coeducational in nature. By implication, those who live in detached communities without gender-compatible schools become vulnerable to exclusion.

Further to gender and distance disparities, disproportion in school placement is eminent. Grown-up disabled individuals who desire empowerment are, for instance, erroneously placed to study alongside children in Nigerian schools, thereby opposing the rationale of inclusion. If the thrusts of (2006) United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are determinedly followed, educational equality can then be guaranteed for the group in a way that they are empowered towards becoming: functional citizens who are able to contribute towards family, community, national, and international developments, as well as leading productive lives. To ensure that education is made accessible and inclusive for disabled people; and inducing for families of disabled girls, radical community reorientation is paramount.

Recommendation

Disabled people are happy to be part of a more inclusive education that properly meets their diverse needs in neighbourhood schools. But In order to educate them in a passably supportive general learning environment, it has become important that they are given opportunities to make inputs in decisions that concern them. Moreover, having found that the extant dearth in their education is not only propelled by lack of resources, but suitable disability and inclusion knowledge deficits equally reinforced by cultural misconstructions, guidance counsellors' cum mass communicators arranged psychosocial reorientation radio programmes is recommended as a panacea for societal ignorance and stereotypes.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest.

References

Agbakuribe, E.O. (2018). Identifying effective information source for road safety and crash reduction messages for Nigerian commercial drivers. A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Postgraduate MSc Degree in Journalism. School of Creative and Cultural Business, Robert Gordon University, United Kingdom. September 2018.

Ajuwon, P.M. (2012). Making inclusive education work in Nigeria: evaluation of special educators' attitudes. Disabilities Studies Quarterly 32(2).

Akanji, D.O(2009. A study of blind education in three states of Nigeria. A Published PH.D Thesis. Trafford, Canada.

Aries, B. (2015). Gender disparity in Nigeria. Enugu: Okonjo and Okotex.

Brydges, C. and Mkandawire, P. (2017).Perceptions and Concerns about Inclusive Education Among Students With Visual Impairments in Lagos, Nigeria. International Journal of Disability, Development and Education. Vol. 64(2), Pp.211-225. DOI; 10.1080/1034912X.2016.1 183768.

Bulus, I. (2007). "Counselling Strategies for Special Needs Children in Nigeria". In E. D. Ozoji and J. M. Okuoyibo (Eds).The Practice and Future of Special Needs Education in Nigeria (pp.155-165). Jos: Deka Publications.

Charema, J. (2005). From special schools to inclusive education – The way forward for developing countries South of the Sahara. Inclusive and supportive education congress. International special education conference, Glasgow, Scotland, U.K.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications. Fourth Edition.

Debanjan, B. (2010). Mass communication: Trends, traits and theories. Journal Media and Communication Studies. Vol. 2(5), pp. 118-121. Available online http://www.academicjournals.org/jmcs ISSN 2141 – 2545.

Egenti U.P. (2018). Teachers' Perception of Guidance Counsellors' Task Performance in Secondary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. American journal of educational research and reviews; 3:20.

Endong, F.P.C. and Obonganwan, E.E. (2015). Media (Mis) Representation of the Nigerian Woman as a Product of the Society . International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies June 2015, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 101-106 ISSN: 2333-6021 (Print), 2333-603X

(Online). American Research Institute for Policy Development. DOI: 10.15640/ijgws.v3n1p10 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/ijgws.v3n1p10.

Ewang, A. (2019). Nigeria passes Disability Rights Law: Offers Hope of Inclusion, Improved Access. Human rights watch article, January 25, 2019.

Frederickson, N. and Cline, T. (2009) Special Educational Needs, Inclusion and Diversity (2nd ed.). Berkshire: Open University Press.

Global Citizen, (2018). Nigeria Has World's Largest Number of Out-of-School Children From: Voice of America. Dec. 12, 2018. Available from: www.globalcitizen.org › content › un-nigeria-13-million

Hanafi, A. (2018). Double trouble for visually impaired pupils in Nigerian schools. Published by Punch on Sat, 06 Oct 2018. Available from: www.latestnigeriannews.com › news › double-trouble-for...(Accessed on 25 October 2020).

Jacob, U.S. and Olisaemeka, A.N. (2016). Inclusive Education In The 21st Century: Parameters And Opportunities For Learners With Special Needs. European Scientific Journal. vol.12(10). ISSN: 1857 – 7881. URL:http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n10p188.

Jenkins, S.R. (2000). Introduction to the special issue: Defining gender, relationships, and power. Sex Roles.;42:467–493. (Google Scholar).

Maduagwu, B.C., Carew, F.C., Fajonyomi, M.G. and Maduagwu, S.M. (2014). Relationship between academic self-esteem and performance in English language and mathematics of primary school pupils. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313755248. Accessed on 2020 April 15].

Munyi, C. W. (2012). 'Past and Present Perceptions Towards Disability: A Historical Perspective'. Journal of Disability Studies Quarterly. Vol 32, No 2.

Obi, F. B., (2007). Equalizing Educational Opportunities for the Nigerian Ghanaian Blind Girl Child. AFR 015.

Obi, F.B. and Ashi, M.M. (2016). Inclusive Education in Nigeria: Access and Equity. Journal of Education and Practice. Vol 7, No 5.

Okonkwo, H.C., Fajonyomi, M.G., Omotosho, J.A., Esere, M.O., and Olawuyi, B.O. (2017. Challenges, Counselling Needs, and Coping Strategies of Students with Visual Impairment in Regular Secondary Schools in Nigeria. Human and Social Studies, Vol. 6(1), pp. 111-137. doi:10.1515/hssr-2016-0008.

Okunna, C.S. (2002). Gender and Communication in Nigeria: is this the Twenty-First Century? (PDF) GENDER AND COMMUNICATION IN NIGERIA: IS THIS...www.semanticscholar.org "paper" GENDER-AND-COM.

Oladele, A. O, Ogunwale O. R. and Dafwat S. S. (2016). Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities In Nigeria: How Far? International Journal of Advanced Academic Research |Arts, Humanities & Education. Vol. 2, (5). ISSN: 2488-9849.

Sibani, C.M. (2017). Gender Inequality and its Challenge to Women Development in Nigeria: The Religious Approach. (PDF) GENDER INEQUALITY AND ITS CHALLENGE TO WOMEN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE RELIGIOUS....www.semanticscholar.org "paper" Gender-Inequality-an.

Umeh, N.C and Adeola, R. (2013) Nigeria African Disability Rights Yearbook. University of Pretoria. Available on www.adry.up.ac.za/index.php/2013-1-section-b-country-reports/nigeria. (Accessed on 25 July 2019).

United Nations, (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Available at http://www.un.org/ disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml [Accessed 22 June 2011).

Vaismoradi, Mojtaba, Hannele Turunen, and Terese Bondas. (2013). "Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis: Implications for Conducting a Qualitative Descriptive Study." Nursing & Health Sciences 15 (3): 398–405.

Warnock, M. (2005). Special Educational Needs: A New Look. London: Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain.

Watson, N. (2012). Theorising the Lives of Disabled Children: How Can Disability Theory Help? Children & SOCIETY VOLUME 26, (2012) pp. 192–202