

Challenges, Counselling Needs, and Coping Strategies of Students with Visual Impairment in Regular Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated challenges, counselling needs and coping strategies of students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria. The descriptive survey of cross-sectional design was employed for the study. Five hundred and twenty-seven students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools were included in the survey by using purposive and captive sampling techniques. The findings of the study revealed that the challenges of students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools include inability to access modern technologies, ($\bar{x} = 3.73$), inappropriate teaching methods ($\bar{x} = 3.64$), non availability of special curriculum ($\bar{x} = 3.57$). It is therefore recommended that teachers and school authorities should ensure that students with visual impairment are taught to develop effective study habits and techniques of self-activity.

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Keywords

Visual impairment, Challenges, Coping strategies, Counseling needs

Introduction

Visual impairment is a term that is used to describe all problems involving effective use of the human eye. The World Health Organization (2012) estimated that 19 million children are visually-impaired worldwide. Twelve (12) million children out of these numbers are visually-impaired due to refractive errors. Regrettably, 1.4 million children are irreversibly blind for the rest of their lives.

In Nigeria, the accurate number of children with visual impairment is not specific. This is because there is no nationally approved data on prevalence and causes of blindness among children in Nigeria (Nigerian National Blindness and Visual Impairment Survey, 2005-2007). However, Ayoku (2006) and Ajobiewe (2008) estimated that 2 million out of 14 million disabled people are visually-impaired. Ajobiewe also stated that about 250,000 of the visually-impaired are children of school age.

All children go through different developmental stages that create for them opportunities and obstacles. However, the visually-impaired face additional challenges while they progress through their childhood years. Students with visual impairments in regular secondary schools and classrooms are faced with many challenges which affect their academic pursuit.

In this research, mainstreaming, integration and inclusion are used interchangeably to refer to the strategy of educating students with visual impairment and those who are non-visually impaired in the same regular secondary school setting. In Nigeria, mainstreaming or integration is popular at the post-primary and tertiary schools. Students at these levels are believed to have mastered skills to be independent enough to remain in the regular school but that is not the case as Ajobiewe and Ajobiewe (2006) noted that students with impaired vision require support services at the basic, post basic and tertiary education levels. Mainstreaming/integration aims at supplying special education needs to students with special needs generally with the objectives of normalization in the Least Restricted Environment (Panda 2007). Individuals with Disabilities Education Acts

(IDEA) (2001) asserted that educating children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers fosters understanding and tolerance by better preparing students of all abilities to function in the world beyond school (Bolanle, 2014).

Students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools experience lots of significant challenges in their daily school lives, such as recognizing objects and people, getting around (mobility), reading, socializing, working, and taking care of their daily needs (e.g. going to school, to class, dining hall, copying notes, washing, fetching water, preparing meals and managing finance). Difficulties with students' daily activities can lead to conditions that seriously reduce the quality of life, such as depression, social isolation, teaching and learning challenges, as well as avocational challenges (Okeke, 2001). These challenges could make adjustment to visual impairment and adaptation to school difficult. Hoover (2003) identified a number of challenges people with visual impairments face when adjusting to vision loss. These include: (a) adequate social skills for interaction with others, especially for those with congenital blindness; (b) adaptation skills to access print; (c) orientation and mobility (O&M) skills both indoors and outdoors, including access to public transportation; and (d) equipment to aid the person working with a computer or other forms of technology.

Students with visual impairments cannot move around as they wish, but have to rely on others wholly or partly to be able to move around and understand positions in the environment. They are deficient in physical skills and general physical condition because of restricted mobility. Therefore, exploration is restricted; and when one cannot explore one's environment appropriately, one is likely to have limited horizon. If such students are isolated from the environment, it will drastically reduce their chances for stimulation and interaction (Okeke, 2001). It will also affect the physical coordination of such students; this can be seen in the awkward manner in which some students with profound or severe visual loss carry their weight while walking (Ugwoke, 1992; Hoover, 2003).

Students with visual impairment try to develop different strategies in order to cope with these challenges. Jacob (2011) identified some coping strategies commonly employed by students with visual impairments. These include: acceptance, trust, positive avoidance, minimization, independence

and control. Students with visual impairments use these coping strategies and resources to help themselves adapt to the environmental demands. These strategies play a key role in determining the nature and extent of the impact of impairment.

Lazarus and Folkman (1994) observed that coping is not just a fixed set of strategies that has to be used whenever needed, but rather its usage depends on the situation being faced. Coping strategy in the context of this research, therefore, refers to those efforts, behaviour and cognition designed and used by students with visual impairments in the mainstream secondary schools in Nigeria to mitigate the challenges imposed by visual limitation in pursuit of education. Students with visual impairments in the regular schools are faced with many challenges that affect their overall performance in school. It is important to note how they are able to cope with these challenges that determine their success in the school system. Identifying the adequacy of the type of coping strategies or behaviour employed is also of equal importance. This will go a long way in enabling appropriate counseling interventions.

Counselling is a professional assistance given by a counsellor to an individual or group of individuals who are either able or disabled for the purpose of understanding their conflicting areas of life better, detecting alternative solution to problems and living a fulfilled life (Idowu&Esere, 2007). Shertzer and Stone (1980) stated that counselling facilitates meaningful understanding of self and environment as it results in the establishment and/or clarification of goals and values for future behaviour. One of the objectives of counselling, as stipulated by Uba (2009), is to help an individual to clear every defeating condition so that he can be what he really wants to be in order to contribute more to self and others. Further, counselling gives the client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living meaningfully towards greater well-being. It enhances the ability of the client to cope with life conditions that are not easy to change (Uba, 2009).

Counselling is about the only thing that can enhance the client's ability to make appropriate life decisions in a situation of visual impairment. Counselling helps the individual to develop the ability to set realistic goals for himself and improve his total being (Idowu&Esere, 2007). Through counselling the individual is brought to a position of thorough

understanding of himself to make an appropriate vocational choice based on his interest, aptitude and talent. It is important to note that most students with visual impairments find it difficult to adjust to school life. This is probably because of the complex school environment they find themselves in. The school as a social circle is full of interactions: student-student, student-teacher, and teacher-teacher. Therefore, students are expected to participate fully in these circles of interaction. Those who are unable to interact in a socially acceptable way in the school environment often experience some challenges, such as self-management, problem-solving, lack of information, and dependence (Idiong, 2010).

Psychological challenges are also of critical importance. This is because adjustment to the environment is heavily dependent on psychological balance. Olawale (2000) posited that it is only when disabled individuals (visually-impaired inclusive) are psychologically balanced that worthwhile achievement can be recorded. This simply means that no matter the programmes on ground to mitigate the effect of visual loss, the students must be psychologically balanced before any meaningful achievement could be recorded. The school counsellor should help students with impaired vision to be psychologically balanced utilizing appropriate counselling strategies to help them realize their full potentials despite their cognitive, emotional, medical, behavioural, physical or social disabilities (Nichter& Edmonson, 2005). Some psychological problems associated with visual impairment may include: denial or non-acceptance of visual disability, resentment or feeling of bitterness about having become a victim of visual loss, feeling of inferiority in comparison to healthy people or feeling of low self-esteem, anxiety and depression (Sudhir, Ashok&Bhavna, 2008). This is why this study is designed to identify the various challenges, counselling needs and coping strategies of students with visual impairments in the regular secondary schools in Nigeria.

Methodology

Design

The research method adopted is the descriptive research survey which is used to collect data from students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in the six geo-political zones in Nigeria.

The descriptive research design of the survey type is considered appropriate because the study intends finding out the challenges, counselling needs and coping strategies of students with visual impairments in regular secondary schools in particular, and how these challenges, counselling needs and coping strategies reflect some specific biographical variables of students with visual impairments in general.

Participants and Setting

The population of the study consisted of all school-age students with visual impairment in Nigeria (27,728). The target population consisted of in-school students with visual impairment (1,383) in the six selected states of Anambra, Bauchi, Cross River, Kaduna, Plateau, and Oyo representing the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. They were selected because literature revealed that placement of the visually-impaired in the regular secondary schools has been going on for a long time in these zones under integration (Sykes & Ozoji, 1992).

The National Bureau of Statistics (2009) estimated that there are about 456,480 persons with visual impairment in the six geo-political zones. This figure includes male, female, adults and children, those in school and those out of school. The first thing the researchers did was to determine the number of school-aged children from the figure. To do this, the researchers used the WHO epidemiological model of estimating visual impairment in developing countries, which suggest that 10% of the population is disabled and 10% of the disabled population is blind. Applying the same formula revealed that there were about 45,648 who are of school-age based on the data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2009). However, the actual number of in-school visually-impaired persons, according to the Federal Ministry of Education (1996) is less than 6% of those who are of school age. The researchers therefore adopted 5% as a bench mark.

The target population is 1,383 out of which 674 ought to be sampled for the study based on the Research Advisors' table for sample selection (2006) at a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 2.5%. However, only 527 respondents were actually met and sampled by the researchers. This is because many of the students were not in schools at the time the data was collected. Another reason could be that many

children that were supposed to be in secondary schools drop out after primary schooling due to perceived challenges in the regular secondary schools and many went to vocational centres.

Instrument

The instrument that was used in data collection for this study was a questionnaire tagged “Challenges, Counselling Needs and Coping Strategies of Students with Visual Impairment Questionnaire” (CCNCSVIQ). It is divided into four sections (A, B, C and D); Section “A” comprised personal information about the respondents. Section “B” was based on 20 questions raised for the challenges faced by students with visual impairments in the regular secondary schools in Nigeria. Section “C” comprised 20 items raised for the counselling needs of students with impaired vision in regular secondary schools in Nigeria while Section “D” comprised another 20 questions for the coping strategies employed by students with impaired vision in the regular secondary schools in Nigeria making a total of 60 items.

A four-point Likert type questionnaire was provided to elicit responses from the participants in the following order: Very True (4), True (3), Some Times True (2), and Not True (1). The validity of the instrument was determined using face and content validities. The reliability of the instrument was determined using a test re-test procedure which yielded a reliability of 0.69 which was considered adequate for a research of this nature.

Method of Data Analysis

The percentage was used to report the demographic data collected in section “A”, while mean and rank order were used to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3. Furthermore, the t-test and the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test the hypotheses while the Duncan-Multiple range test was used to identify the direction of the significant difference established in the ANOVA results.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

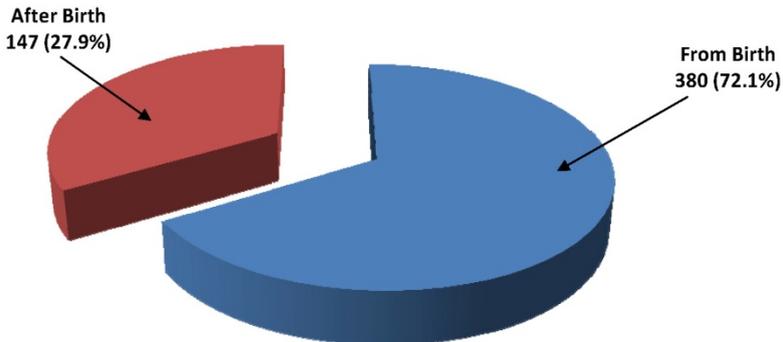


Fig. 1: Onset of Visual Impairment

Figure 1 shows that 380 (72.1%) of the 527 respondents became visually-impaired “From birth”, while 147 (27.9%) had theirs “After birth”.

Research Question 1: What are the major challenges faced by students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria?

Table 1: Rank Order on Challenges of Students with Visual Impairment in Regular Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Item No.	As a result of my visual loss, the challenges I experience include:	Mean	Rank
11	inability to access modern technologies	3.73	1 st
10	inappropriate teaching methods	3.64	2 nd
9	non availability of special curriculum	3.61	3 rd
12	barriers in the environment	3.57	4 th
15	lack of Braille materials for instruction	3.56	5 th
5	non specialist teachers in the subject matters	3.56	5 th
13	no resource room for improved learning	3.42	7 th
4	inadequate facilities for learning in regular schools	3.19	8 th
8	inappropriate learning facilities	3.13	9 th

14	inability to access financial support from the govt.	3.11	10 th
17	difficulty in getting admission into higher institutions	2.64	11 th
19	feeling inferior in the class	2.62	12 th
16	lack of school authority's support	2.54	13 th
1	teachers doubting my abilities	2.52	14 th
7	unfriendly attitude of students	2.43	15 th
2	friends taking decisions on my behalf	2.36	16 th
3	some cultural/traditional beliefs about my condition	2.27	17 th
20	bullying by sighted students	1.68	18 th
6	difficulty making friends	1.34	19 th
18	bullying by teachers	1.18	20 th

Table 1 presents, in rank order of magnitude, the challenges of students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria. Fifteen of the 20 items (70.0%) have mean scores above 2.50, the cut-off point for determining the level of the challenges. Hence 70.0% of the challenges were major ones while the remaining 30% were minor ones.

Research Question 2: What are the Counselling Needs of Students with Visual Impairment in Regular Secondary Schools in Nigeria?

Table 2: Rank Order on Counselling Needs of Students with Visual Impairment in Regular Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Item No.	As a student with visual impairment in regular secondary school, I need counselling on how to:	Mean	Rank
1	develop effective study habit	3.92	1 st
8	make correct choice of subject combinations	3.89	2 nd
19	get information on agencies that can assist me	3.85	3 rd
10	secure a good job	3.81	4 th
20	get information on existing educational programmes	3.73	5 th
6	adjust to teachers' instructional inadequacies	3.70	6 th
3	cope with my studies	3.69	7 th
16	avoid being aggressive	3.65	8 th
9	choose a good career that suits my condition	3.62	9 th

17	avoid being inferior to other students	3.60	10 th
18	develop positive self-concept (be myself)	3.52	11 th
11	maintain good relationship with other students	3.37	12 th
12	cope with the stigma of visual loss	3.36	13 th
7	handling academic stress	3.35	14 th
15	accept my condition and forge ahead	3.28	15 th
13	relate with the opposite sex who are non-visually impaired	3.28	15 th
14	make myself happy	3.25	17 th
4	cope with the regular school environment	3.23	18 th
5	adjust to inadequate infrastructure in the regular school	3.18	19 th
2	bear the negative attitudes of other students	2.81	20 th

Table 2 presents, in rank order of magnitude, counselling needs of students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria. The analysis indicated that all the 20 items were accepted as high counselling needs.

Research Question 3: What are the Coping Strategies Employed by Students with Visual Impairment in Regular Secondary Schools in Nigeria?

Table 3: Rank Order on Coping Strategies Employed by Students with Visual Impairment in Regular Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Item No.	As a student with visual impairment in regular secondary school, I cope by:	Mean score	Rank
12	learning to do my daily activities myself	3.80	1 st
13	listening to inspirational talk/music on tape	3.78	2 nd
4	requesting assistance from friends	3.77	3 rd
1	working hard to solve my problems	3.70	4 th
11	talking to myself that I am not alone in my condition	3.68	5 th
6	evaluating the achievements of other visually-impaired students	3.53	6 th
2	ignoring negative attitude towards me	3.41	7 th
10	aspiring to be independent	3.38	8 th
3	adjusting to the facilities available for my studies	3.35	9 th

14	listening/reading the word of God	3.33	10 th
17	praying to God	3.33	10 th
7	hoping that my situation could be better	3.31	12 th
16	planning my school work and following it up	3.13	13 th
5	avoiding thinking about my situation	2.94	14 th
15	relying on audio materials for daily transmission	2.90	15 th
9	interacting freely with other students	2.83	16 th
19	avoiding other students	2.81	17 th
20	relying on family for support	2.51	18 th
8	taking drugs such as alcohol to forget my problems	2.15	19 th
18	using computer and other gadgets to facilitate my study	1.81	20 th

Table 3 shows, in rank order of magnitude, the preferred coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria. The results revealed that 18 (90.0%) out of the 20 items have mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50. Hence, the majority of the items were highly preferred coping strategies. The remaining two (10%) of the items were below the cut-off point of 2.50 which indicated that they were not highly preferred coping strategies.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant difference in the challenges faced by students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria on the basis of Onset of visual impairment*

Table 4: Result of t-test comparing the challenges faced by students with visual impairment on the basis of Onset of visual impairment

Onset of Visual Impairment	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit.	Decision
From birth	380	54.38	7.73	525	4.95*	1.96	Rejected
After birth	147	51.04	6.60				

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

The results indicated that the mean score “From birth” (54.38) and that of “After birth” (51.04), yielded a calculated t-value (4.95), is greater than critical t-value (1.96). Therefore, hypothesis 1 was rejected; $t(525)=4.95, p<0.05$. Hence there was a significant difference in the challenges faced by students who are visually-impaired “From birth” and those who are visually-impaired “After birth.” The former had a mean score (54.38) geater than the latter (51.04).

Hypothesis 2: *There is no significant difference in the counselling needs of students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria on the basis of Onset of visual impairment*

Table 5: Result of t-test comparing the counselling needs of students with visual impairment on the bases of the Onset of visual impairment

Onset of Visual Impairment	Number	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit.	Decision
From birth	380	70.27	3.89	525	0.98	1.96	Accepted
After birth	147	69.85	5.24				

Table 5 shows the t-test result for significant difference on counselling needs of students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria. The results indicated no significant difference.

Hypothesis 3: *There is no significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria based on the Onset of visual impairment*

Table 6: Result of t-test comparing the Coping strategies Employed by Students with Visual Impairment based on the Onset of Visual Impairment

Onset of Visual Impairment	N	Mean	Sd	df	t-cal	t-crit.	Decision
From birth	380	62.05	7.25	525	7.83*	1.96	Rejected
After birth	147	67.38	6.25				

* Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 6 presents the t-test result for significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria. The hypothesis was rejected; $t(525) = 7.83$, $p < 0.05$.

Discussion

The demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that more students 380 (72.1%) had their impairment “From birth” (congenital), while the remaining 147 (27.9%) became visually-impaired “After birth” (adventitious or acquired). Hence, there were more students who had their visual impairment “From birth” than “After birth”. This finding is surprising considering the high level of medical advancement in the country. The reason for this could be that most students who claimed to have had their impairment from birth may have had it early in life when they may not have had any visual memory. This finding corroborates Ayoku’s (2006) assertion that those who became blind before acquiring the ability to recall from visual memory are described as congenitally blind. However, since the majority of students who participated in the study are aged 12-19 (the secondary school age), they may as well be correct in their claims. If that is the case, it is suggestive that our poor health facilities in the country and poor pre-birth attendance by mothers especially in rural communities may have caused it since most of the parents of the students have primary and secondary education.

The rank orders of challenges faced by students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria revealed that students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria have many challenges. The most important challenge is the inability to access modern technologies. The result is not surprising because education today is technology-driven. Assistive technologies such as jaws for windows, screen readers which enable the visually impaired to make use of computers, the open book scanning software which enables the visually-impaired to read printed materials, Win Braille which helps in the translation of printed materials into Braille, among others (Agba 2007), have revolutionized the education of the visually-impaired. According to Iroegbu (2007), the inability to access such technologies like the computer Braille embosser, internet facilities and Braille machine means that they will be lagging behind the sighted students and as such, their educational scope will be limited. Emphasis is shifting to the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics for students with visual impairment, and accessing modern technologies in the area of information and communication technologies will enable them participate in almost all the subjects including Science and Mathematics.

The second challenge in order of importance is inappropriate teaching methods. This challenge did not come as a surprise because of the importance of teaching methodology in teachers' instructional delivery. Iroegbu (2007) supported this and observed that the learning needs of the visually-impaired determine the method of instruction to be employed. Most teachers in the regular secondary schools lack the requisite skills and techniques to teach the visually-impaired. Hence, they are not able to determine whether such student have both normal and specific learning needs which require generalized and /or particularized teaching methods. However, whatever method the teacher employs should follow the prescribed principles of teaching the visually-impaired as developed by Lowenfeld in 1973.

Any teacher willing to make a difference in his/her career as a teacher of the visually-impaired should acquire these skills. They include:

1. the individualization of instruction. This teaching is tailored towards the individual needs of the learner. More precisely, it involves

using tangible things to provide opportunities that will exercise all senses of the learner (either singly or in combination).

2. Unified instruction. This involves adapting an integrated teaching approach aimed at bringing interrelatedness into the concept taught to the visually-impaired.

3. Self-activity: Here, students are kept really active in the learning process by engaging in some of the learning tasks. Additional stimuli on the other hand entail broadening the horizon of the learner's experience through planned programmes. These skills will certainly make teaching a participatory activity for students with visual impairment.

The absence of a special curriculum was the next challenge in order of importance. A special curriculum is designed to teach students with visual impairment some special skills and techniques to enable them function effectively in the school and society. Here, students are taught skills of mobility and orientation, daily living, Braille reading and writing (communication skills), and other specific ways and things for effective integrations. The current practice of limiting the teaching and learning of these skills in the primary school means limiting the participation of these students in some subjects and courses like Sciences and Mathematics. Ndungu'u (2011) maintained that there are some concepts that can only be better explained if put in tactile form. Castellano (2004) supported this view when she stated that students with visual impairment who use Braille attain a literacy level equal to and sometimes above that of sighted students. Students who are denied Braille often cannot effectively complete advance classes like Algebra and Geometry or venture into sciences (Rodriguez, 2001).

Another challenge that the study identified was barriers in the environment. Barriers are obstacles that obstruct free access and participation in school activities by students with visual impairment. They could be physical or architectural in nature. In regular schools, these obstacles are seen in every corner. The result is not surprising because in all the schools visited in the six geo-political zones in the country, none did make any special provision in their school environment bearing in mind the presence of this category of students. As a result, these students keep on falling and getting injured very often. Even where the classrooms are upstairs, students with impaired vision

use the same staircase sometimes without protectors. Architectural designs or structures should include ramp, rails and part ways for easy access. This finding finds support in Lere (2014) who reported that barriers pose a challenge in accommodating the special needs persons in the current Universal Basic Education programme. He noted that the National Policy on Education (1998) stated that the architectural designs of school buildings shall take into account the special needs of the handicapped. But this has not been so, as virtually all over the country, school structures are architecturally-unfriendly.

It was evident from the findings too that there was a lack of Braille materials for instruction. Most of the texts that are in use by these students are still in print. Students with visual impairment do not have these texts on Braille to read. They rely on listening to the teachers or fellow students; which means, they may not have something to read on their own. This will definitely affect their literacy level, while some will not engage in complex mathematical studies. Entry into science or science-related courses will also be affected. This finding supports Iroegbu's (2007) observation that students with visual impairment may not necessarily have an "education methodology problem" per se, rather "educational material problems"; but it has been maintained that if there are Braille reading and writing as well as acoustic materials, students could attend full-time regular classes.

The findings also revealed that there are no specialist teachers in the subject matters. This result is not unexpected because in all regular schools that admitted students with visual impairment, there was no special teacher who specialized in a particular subject which he/she was teaching. This may have been influenced by the pattern of teacher training model in Nigeria where categorical specialization is being emphasized; categorical training in the sense that trainees are meant to be trained in a specific area of disability. This type of training is limited because the recipient is expected to focus in that area of specialization. Ozoji (2005) called for the re-examination of this type of model of special education teacher training in favour of a non-categorical method of special education teacher training so that trained teachers should be able to function effectively when posted to regular schools.

The study also revealed that there were no resource rooms for improved learning. The importance of a resource room in the education of students with visual impairment cannot be over-looked. This is because the resource room which is manned by a special teacher, stuffed with the necessary resources, is the hallmark of integrated education for the visually-impaired. Students, after their lessons, go to the resource room to get additional support service to enable them understand the lesson very well. Usually, the child goes to the resource room for those subjects the regular teacher is incompetent to teach, after which the child returns to the regular classroom to continue his/her instruction (Ozaji 2005). However, what is seen as resource rooms in most of the schools visited are mere staff rooms without any special materials for learning.

The study revealed also that facilities for learning in the regular schools are inadequate as well as inappropriate. Educational facilities include human and material resources; technologies that are employed in teaching the visually-impaired. Iroegbu (2007) observed that they are supportive and technological devices developed to assist in teaching-learning tasks involving children with visual impairment. Some of these facilities include Braille materials, mobility canes, raised or relief diagrams, talking calculators, typewriters, computer Braille embosser, Braille machines, professionally-trained personnel and so no. These facilities are visibly absent in all the schools visited. Such practices like: faulty seating arrangement, using paper graph sheet to teach students with visual impairment, teaching shapes and contour with chalk and board were common among the teachers in regular secondary schools.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that they are unable to access financial support from government at every level (Local, State & Federal). Educating students with visual impairment either in the regular school or in the special schools is capital intensive, therefore it requires assistance in form of subsidy, or reduction in fees paid by these students, or free education, as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2013). Leaving sponsorship in the hands of voluntary agencies, non-governmental, charity organizations or parents will affect the quality and quantity of education provided for these categories of students. This finding is supported by Ozaji (2005) who reported that special needs education is costlier to run than regular education. Ironically, he stated

that what is costlier to fund receives far less, has no specific funding formular and source, and often is attended to when resources overflow from the budget of regular education.

Other findings from the study revealed that students with visual impairment face difficulty in getting admission to higher institutions in the country. Admissions into institutions of higher learning is based on passing prescribed examinations like the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE), the exams of the National Examination Council (NECO), the National Business and Technical Education Board (NABTEB), the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), and so on, and certain subject combinations which include English and Mathematics. Because Mathematics and science subjects are poorly handled at the secondary school level, they are difficult to pass by this category of students hence limiting their chances of getting any course to read. For instance, JAMB has recently introduced Computer Based Test (CBT) and the majority of the students with visual impairment have no access to computers, let alone training on CBT, yet they are expected to use it. Added to their problem is the introduction of Post University Matriculation Examination (Post-UME), which some universities and other higher institutions introduced, mostly using CBT. These challenges reduce the chances of getting admission to one's course of choice.

In all, students with visual impairments face enormous challenges in the regular secondary schools in Nigeria since 15 out of the 20 items had mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50. However, some items such as the unfriendly attitude of students, friends talking decision on their behalf, some cultural/traditional beliefs about their condition, bullying by sighted students, difficultly making friends and bullying by teachers were not significant challenges because they are below the cut-off point of 2.50. These run contrary to Esere, Okonkwo and Omotosho's findings (2014) from the south-eastern states of the country which affirm that these items are serious challenges. The reason for such a difference or change may be as a result of awareness and the early introduction of students with visual impairment into primary school, and perhaps religion. It could as well be that the students did not understand the questions or culture. This corroborates the findings of Okeke and Ozoji (2002), who found that socio-cultural factors, local customs, religious

beliefs and values, as well as societal attitudes towards disability, are part of their problems.

On the counselling needs, 20 items were raised which addressed critical areas of counselling needs which, when addressed, will further enhance the chances of reducing if not totally eliminating them. The findings revealed that each of the items has a mean score above 2.50, which is the cut-off point to determine the areas of counselling needs. These items include, in order of importance: assistance on how to develop effective study habits, making the correct choice of subject combination, getting a good job, and getting information on agencies that can assist visually impaired students, teachers' instructional inadequacies as well as how to cope with studies. These items tilted towards educational counselling. This finding is in consonance with the observation of Mobgo (2007) that some issues that impede on the effective academic performance of disabled persons such as anxiety, fear of failure, or poor study habits, can all be addressed through counselling. Mobogo noted that counselling techniques such as reinforcement, particularly contingency contracting, can be used to enhance socially-approved behaviours, while systematic desensitization can be used to remove anxiety, and fear of school and failure, from students with visual impairment.

Aggressiveness has been associated with the characteristics of most disabled persons. Students with impaired vision sometimes exhibit aggression. They therefore need counselling on how not to be aggressive, irrespective of the situation. This is in the area of personal-social counselling. This finding is in line with Mogbo's (2007) finding that low self-esteem causes aggression. The visually-impaired need counselling to avoid having poor self-esteem. They need also some assertiveness and social skills techniques to avoid negative self-esteem.

To choose a good career that suits their condition was another area of counselling need as revealed by the study. The major aim of educating students with impaired vision is to have gainful employment but more often than not this aim is defeated because of the discriminating attitude of employers. Counselling can play a major role that could enable students with impaired vision to be self-employed and develop self-confidence and abilities that can make them employers of other people

(Mogbo 2007). The use of psychological tests such as Vocational Interest Inventory (VII), Occupational Interest Scale (OIS), Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDESES), Student Adjustment Scale (SAS), and so on can be of great help to the counsellor. This finding is supported by Onota (2002) who reported that counselling points out the pathway to progress, clears the clouds, positions the client to make the right career choice and take decisions regarding his/her psycho-social problems. Ajobiwe (2006) is also of the view that through counseling, an individual is brought to a position of a thorough understanding of himself to make an appropriate vocational choice based on his interest, aptitude, talents and a multitude of other variables that must be considered.

Avoiding being inferior to other students in class, developing a positive self-concept, coping with the stigma of visual loss (personal-social counselling) are other counseling needs that were of significant importance based on the outcome of the analyzed data. These findings support the findings of Oriafio (2002) and Ajobiwe (2006) that personal-social counselling assists handicapped persons to accept the reality of their conditions, just as Mogbo (2007) had earlier found that the handicapped condition triggers off negative feelings of shock, frustration, loss, the feeling of inferiority, the feeling of non-acceptance, prejudice, stigmatization and neglect among others. Handling academic stress, accepting their condition to forge ahead (Adjustment counselling), relating with the opposite sex, making themselves happy (Personal-social counselling) also achieved a significant importance, in that order.

Coping with the regular school environment, adjusting to the infrastructural inadequacies of regular schools, bearing the negative attitude of other students, instructional strategies and adaptation techniques, the acquisition of resource materials and so on were all considered by respondents as significant areas of counselling needs. This goes to support Olawale (2000), who reported that counselling should provide solutions to challenges relating to learning, teaching methods, admission opportunities, academic failure, study habits and examination. The conclusion that could be drawn from the findings is that students with visual impairment in the regular secondary schools in Nigeria are in dire need of counselling to combat the challenges created by visual loss as well as in choosing the right coping behaviour. These could be

categorized into: Educational, personal-social, vocational, and informational and adjustment counselling.

The interpretation of the analysis of the result of the rank order of preferred coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in the regular secondary schools in Nigeria revealed that the coping strategies of students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria are many. These coping strategies, in order of importance, showed that “learning to do my daily activities myself” was followed by “listening to inspirational talk/music” and “requesting assistance from friends”. Others are “working hard to solve my problems”, “talking to myself that I am not alone in my condition” and “evaluating the achievement of other students with visual impairment”, among others. However, “using computer and other gadgets to facilitate my study” and “taking drugs such as alcohol to forget my problems”, were not major among the preferred coping strategies since they had low scores below 2.50, which is the cut-off point for preferred coping strategies of students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria.

The results revealed that 18 out of the 20 items had mean scores of above 2.50, the cut-off point for determining the significant level of coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in Nigeria. These findings support Lazarus and Folkman’s (1994) view that coping is not just a fixed set of strategies that has to be used whenever needed but depends on the situations being faced. The findings also aligned with Olso, McElheron and Pilorget’s (2011) findings that there are wide ranges of personal coping strategies used by people who are visually-impaired, which they categorized into three sets: Mental/attitude, Leisure/occupational and Support/social network. It should be noted that some of the items in this arrangement are similar to the ones in this study.

The findings are not unexpected because Adeoye (1992) noted that coping behaviours are actions taken to deal with stressor which include cognitive restructuring, tension reduction, problem-solving and stress monitoring among others. Adeoye stressed that they are behaviour modification coping resources which are personal attributes that help the individual to reduce or eliminate a threatening situation like visual loss.

The conclusion of the researcher is that students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria employed problem solving coping strategies, cognitive restructuring coping strategies, social support coping strategies, problem avoidance, wishful thinking and social withdrawal coping strategies to deal with the effects of visual loss in the regular secondary schools in Nigeria.

Hypothesis One indicated that a significant difference existed in the challenges faced by students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria on the bases of the onset of visual impairment. In other words, both “From birth”, i.e those students who were born with or became visually-impaired at very early stage of their life, and “After birth”, i.e. those who became visually-impaired after being born with sight, experience different challenges in the regular secondary schools in Nigeria. Ayoku (2006) acknowledged that some students become blind from birth or shortly after or before acquiring the ability to recall visual memory.

According to Ayoku, those that became blind before acquiring the ability to recall from visual memory are described as congenitally blind, while the others are adventitiously blind. He concluded that the effect of visual impairment varies depending on whether the loss of sight is congenital or adventitious. Ajobiewe (2008) corroborated this when he stated that the effect varies due to such factors as the amount of appropriate visual stimulation which the person with visual impairment acquired from the environment, the severity and the age of the onset of the impairment and the attitude of the parents of the person with visual impairment towards their child with impaired vision.

Hypothesis Two indicated that no significant difference existed between the counselling needs of “From birth” and “After birth” students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria. Ajobiewe (2007) suggested that the counselling needs of the visually impaired should be in the area of social, educational, physiological/emotional needs as well as medical and information needs. These needs accordingly are required by every student to be able to perform optimally in the regular school system. This finds relevance in the suggestions by Bulus (2007) that counsellors should be able to get information about the existing agencies and personnel that specialize in effective diagnoses

of the students' visual disability, to find out existing educational programmes specially designed for students with visual impairment, to keep students informed of any new discoveries in science and technology that are relevant to the needs of students with visual impairment, and to win, for visually impaired students, the positive acceptance and empathic understanding of the staff and students of the college community.

However, Hypothesis Three showed that a significant difference existed between the coping strategies employed by "From birth" and "After birth" students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in Nigeria. This finding agrees with Sudhir, Ashok and Bhavna's (2008) study which upheld that people who became visually-impaired after birth may present resentment. According to these researchers, they may withdraw from social contact due to inadequate vision, or feel helpless about their visual loss.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended the following:

Since students with visual impairment "From birth" experienced more challenges than "After birth" visually impaired students, researchers recommended that parents should try to support their children at an early age in order for them to become familiar with things like how to feel objects using texture, shapes and on how to explore their environment using their fingers. Toys of different shapes and sizes can be very useful in this regard. Parents should allow children with visual impairment to explore their environment with barriers and obstacles with instructions on how to successfully navigate through them. This will make the children have confidence in themselves even before coming to school. In schools, teachers should try to provide some assisting and adaptive technological devices like Braille materials early enough so that students with visual impairment could become familiar with them. Teachers with a special education background should be employed to provide support in resource rooms.

Both "From birth" and "After birth" students with visual impairment require counselling. Researchers, therefore, recommended that school authorities should make an effort to develop counselling programmes

that can teach these students skills of effective study habits and help them make a correct choice of subjects.

Since students who became visually-impaired after birth were not coping properly in the study, the researchers recommended that students should learn how to engage in personal activities, listen to inspirational talks/music, and evaluate the achievements of other students with visual impairment.

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