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Gender Influence on Teachers' Awareness of Specialised Teaching Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities in Inclusive Schools in Obio-Akpor LGA

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Abstract

This study investigated the impacts of gender on teachers' awareness of specialised teaching strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities in inclusive schools within Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study was motivated by the growing concern that teachers' limited awareness of effective instructional approaches may hinder the academic progress of learners with learning disabilities, despite ongoing inclusive education reforms. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of all teachers in selected public and private inclusive schools in the area, from which a representative sample was drawn using stratified random sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire titled *Teachers' Awareness of Specialised Teaching Strategies for Learners with Learning Disabilities Questionnaire (TASTSLD-Q)* was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in special education and measurement, and reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while t-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that teachers generally exhibited a low level of awareness of specialised teaching strategies such as differentiated instruction, multisensory teaching, individualised education plans, and the use of assistive technologies. The study further found that gender had no significant influence on teachers' awareness of these specialised teaching strategies. The results imply that the challenge of inadequate teacher preparedness for inclusive classrooms is not gender-dependent but may be due to insufficient professional development and exposure to inclusive practices. The study concluded that both male and female teachers require improved training to enhance their competence in meeting the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities. It was recommended that educational authorities and school administrators organise regular workshops, seminars, and in-service training programs to improve teachers' knowledge and skills in inclusive pedagogy. Strengthening teachers' awareness of specialised teaching strategies is essential for promoting equity, inclusion, and quality learning outcomes in Nigerian schools.

Keywords: Gender, Teachers' Awareness, Specialised Teaching Strategies, Learning Disabilities, Inclusive Education.

Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping individuals and societies, and teachers remain central to the effective delivery of inclusive education. In recent times, there has been growing recognition of the need to address the learning needs of students with disabilities through specialised teaching strategies that promote participation, engagement, and academic success. Teachers' awareness of such strategies—ranging from differentiated instruction and individualised education plans (IEPs) to the use of assistive technologies is crucial in fostering equitable learning opportunities for

all learners. However, the level of awareness and application of these specialised strategies may vary across teachers due to several demographic factors, including gender (Davis, 2004).

Gender differences in the teaching profession have been widely explored in relation to teaching styles, attitudes toward inclusion, and classroom management. Some studies suggest that female teachers tend to exhibit higher levels of empathy and patience in managing learners with special needs, while male teachers may show a stronger inclination toward structured and disciplinary approaches. These differences could potentially influence the degree of awareness and use of specialised instructional strategies for students with learning disabilities. Understanding how gender influences teachers' awareness can therefore provide valuable insight for policy formulation to enhance the effectiveness of school administrators and teacher educators in professional development programs (Boyle et al., 2017). Learning disabilities—such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and attention deficit disorders—present unique instructional challenges that require specialised knowledge and pedagogical adjustments. Teachers' preparedness and awareness of these needs determine the extent to which inclusive education goals are achieved in mainstream schools. Consequently, examining gender-based dichotomy in awareness is not only limited to inclusive education research but promote quality education for all learners, as emphasised in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) (Alahmadi, 2023).

Concept of Learning Disability

Guyit et al. (2016) observed that a person with a learning disability has problems learning certain life skills. Although the problems experienced vary from person to person, they may include aspects such as learning new things, communication, managing money, reading, writing, or personal care. Some people are born with a disability, whereas others may develop one as a result of an accident or illness in childhood. Types of learning disabilities differ hugely. Someone with mild disabilities may be able to live independently with minimal support, whereas someone with severe and profound disabilities may require 24-hour care and help with performing most daily living skills. Similarly, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (2011) emphasised that learning disability is defined by the Department of Health as a “significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), which started before adulthood”.

Oluka and Okorie (2014) emphasised that learning disabilities arise from a situation where pupils and students find it very difficult to explore their emotional, physical, social, and intellectual capabilities and potentials which could inspire their learning or schooling performances. The difficulty may be singularly or jointly related to mental, cognitive, and psycho-social factors. Thus, in some circumstances, gifted and talented persons with high or average intelligence could be confronted with special needs like: hearing impairment, visual impairment, speech and language impairment, orthopaedic impairment, social maladjustment, learning disabilities and multiple impairments. Also, learners with distinct learning frailty require expert identification, intervention and special care from trained professionals. Furthermore, *Reiff, Gerber and Ginsberg (2013) defined learning disabilities (otherwise learning disorders) as a collection of maladies likely to distort the optimal utilisation of diverse academic and functional skills, including the ability to speak, listen, read, write, spell, reason, organise information, and do math.*

Sawhney and Bansal (2014) see learning disabilities as delays, aberrations and discrepancies in learners' performance in rudimentary academic subjects like arithmetic, reading, writing, spelling and speech. These deviations, which trigger disparities in learning, cannot alone be attributed to mental retardation, sensory deficits, or emotional disturbances, but to a variety of different conditions that could undermine educational advancement. Unfortunately, due to a lack of awareness among teachers, parents and school authorities, the majority of these learners are never identified with issues that make learning difficult or unattainable for them; rather, they are commonly labelled as slow, behind, incapable and failures. Consequently, the central focus of learning disabilities involves specific learning and cognition disorders that can intrinsically and significantly affect the academic and performance outcomes of both pupils and students. Learning disabilities may occur in combination with other disabling conditions, but they are not due primarily to other conditions, such as intellectual disability, behavioural disturbance, lack of opportunities to learn, or primary sensory deficits (Bradley, Danielson & Hallahan, 2010).

Types of learning disabilities

Myers and Hammill, cited in Agomoh and Kanu (2015), gave six major areas of learning disabilities:

1. Disorders of motor activity:
2. Including hyperactivity, hypoactivity, incoordination and perseveration
3. Disorders of emotionality: including dependency, frustration, etc.
4. Disorders of perception: including problems of interpreting, identifying, discriminating, and general decoding of receptive.
5. Disorders of symbolization; including the integration, reception and memory, etc.
6. Disorders of attention. Including attention deficit.
7. Disorders of memory: including assimilation, storage and recall behaviour.

Teachers Strategies

Dorgu (2015) see teaching strategies as any teaching techniques, skills, manoeuvres, or methods that can be used to facilitate pupils' and students' learning and satisfaction. Different teaching strategies may elicit different types of changes in learning outcomes. Teaching strategies or methods are many and varied and could be used in different ways, considering, among others, the age of the learners, body configuration or physique of learners (able or disabled learners). Academic ability/intelligence of the learners, number of learners and, of course, the type of curriculum discipline, which recognises the fact that certain teaching methods are much more suitable to some disciplines than others. Vikoo (2003) earlier discussed the types of teaching strategies under three summated or summarised categories via: cognitive development strategies, affective development strategies, and psychomotor development strategies. Whether individually or jointly adopted, these strategies are expected to be integrated or used to meet the learning or instructional needs of pupils and students along the three domains of knowledge.

Oluranti (2014) reiterate that the instructional delivery process is enhanced by improving the strategic ways of supporting pupils and students with learning difficulties or disabilities. Method of teaching denotes the strategy by which a teacher delivers his/her subject matter to the learners based on some predetermined instructional objectives in order to promote learning in the pupils and students. For a teacher to effectively adopt any teaching method or strategy, some factors must be considered. The effective implementation of any curriculum depends to a large extent on the availability of various methods of teaching. Thus, to teach is to impact knowledge, an attempt to help the pupil and student (learner) have a change of attitude and acquire skills through a series of planned activities, programmes, class and counselling sessions, and instructional periods or processes put in place to achieve the goal of learning (Buseri & Dorgu, 2011).

Dorgu (2015) emphasised that the teachers' singular or combined use of the appropriate teaching methods or strategies in the classroom setting could facilitate or accelerate pupils and students (especially those with learning disabilities) learning, satisfaction, interest in schooling, effective implementation of the curriculum, and the achievement of educational goals. Achievement of this enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of the good or professional teacher who is trained to be multi-talented, multifaceted and conversant with the use of various teaching strategies in the teaching and learning process. Hence, the teacher is a vital factor in the success of an educational system of a nation; therefore, teachers should be familiar with the principles underlying the choice of teaching strategies.

UNESCO (2009) stated that an inclusive education system is created to enhance the education of all pupils and students (with or without learning disabilities). Regular schools with [an]inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 2009). Consequently, learners in the inclusive educational system, pupils and students (those with educational needs that are not associated with a disability), are often placed in classes with pupils and students who have disabilities where both are instructed alongside each other. Critics assert that placing at-risk students in the same classes as pupils and students with disabilities may impede the educational progress of people with disabilities (Thompson, 2008a). Some special education classes have been criticised for a watered-down curriculum (Thompson, 2008b).

Oluka and Okorie (2014) opined that teachers (irrespective of their gender, educational qualification, and years of experience) should endeavour to learn, increase their awareness and use innovative strategies for teaching and improving the needs of pupils and students with learning disabilities in Nigerian schools. These interventions require skilled identification, intervention and special care from professionally proficient teachers who devise ways for encouraging pupils and students with learning disabilities to try harder with doing tasks or assignments, and closely improve their level of motivation, which will undoubtedly help classroom teachers to effectively mentor and assist pupils and students cope with their studies.

Generally, Oluka and Okorie (2014) stated that the teaching strategies adopted by teachers in helping pupils and students with learning disabilities are mainly in the form of assistance to a particular pupil and student to learn and improve in his/her area of difficulty whether in: spelling, writing deficiency, reading (especially in other language rather than mother tongue), inability to do mathematics and calculation, including hyperactivity, or hypo-activity that incite behavioural problems like lack of attention and concentration which distorts teaching and learning processes for a longer time. In other words, teachers in classes with pupils and students with learning disabilities need to individually observe each child and devise a remediation pattern, method or strategy. This is extremely difficult, especially across inclusive public schools with large class sizes for teachers to effectively carry out this task of helping every pupil and student learn at the same pace and time. To this end, Breckenridge and Vogler (2011) stated that reading/spelling should be made compulsory in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria to help or assist pupils and students with various forms of learning disabilities.

On the other hand, Gaylord-Ross (2006) stressed that designing teaching strategies or methods to suit the generality of pupils and students in the classroom could be regarded or termed a rational decision which eventually produces counterproductive results, especially where pupils and students with special needs requiring deliberate interventions are present in such classrooms. Therefore, special education in developed countries is often regarded as a service rather than a place, while in developing countries such as Nigeria, special education is regarded as a place where all categories of pupils and students (with different forms of learning disabilities) are integrated or included in the same classroom. Integration in an inclusive educational system is meant to reduce social stigmas and improve academic achievement for many pupils and students who ought to benefit from the outcome of learning (Gartner & Lipsky, 2008).

Instructively, Oluka and Okorie (2014) study focused on determining innovative strategies for improving special educational needs for secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Oluranti (2014) study centred on understanding the various strategies teachers use in supporting learners with learning difficulties in an inclusive secondary school classroom, while that by Dorgu (2015) centred on the teaching methods as a panacea for effective curriculum implementation in the classroom in Nigeria. However, teachers' awareness and use of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities, especially in inclusive schools (i.e. primary and secondary schools), will be enhanced when they strive to remove the negative thoughts, feelings, and stereotypes responsible for the issue of anxiety-inducing situations which emotionally destabilise and obstruct their ability or capacity to intellectually articulate and effectively learn. Thus, teachers or educators need to effectively play the role by recognising and remedying anxiety-inducing situations, presenting individualised strategies, and supporting pupils and students in the use of these strategies in the classroom. These strategies are not innate and must be learned.

Conversely, the success in the discharge of the duty of a teacher depends to a large extent on the degree to which teachers possess the necessary cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills. Therefore, the teacher should be aware, possess, or have the appropriate knowledge, attitude and physical skills to carry out whatever activities he/she is expected to engage in, to help pupils and students (learners) with learning disability or special needs acquire desired knowledge and skills to bring about changes and transformations brought by education or learning outcomes (Buseri & Dorgu, 2011). Omieibi-Davies (2011) sees the changes or transformations in learning, intellectual reasoning, conduct, behaviour and character molding of pupils and students that occurs as a result of teaching and instructional delivery could lead to: an increased store of useful information and the understanding of basic principles in the subject matter, an acquisition of psychomotor skills, abilities and habits, and possession of desirable attitudes and ideas, such as developing satisfaction about learning outcomes.

Behaviourism Theory

The behaviourism theory as a classroom management theory is more focused on teacher-directed methods or strategies, whereas cognitive theory emphasises student-centred methods. According to Rogers and Freiberg (1994), the child-centred classroom management model started from criticising the perspective of behaviourism, which is considered a teacher-centred classroom discipline strategy. That entails a collection of specific items that make up each of the two subsets (i.e., student-centred and teacher-centred approaches) that point towards classroom management. These two approaches are the opposite ends of a continuum, and it is difficult to say that a teacher has just a student-centred approach or a teacher-centred approach (Freiberg, 1999). However, this classification is useful to find out which orientation is dominant in a teacher's classroom management approach.

Moreover, research efforts to explore classroom management approaches are limited by the quality of instruments currently available to measure teachers' perceptions and beliefs. CMI used in this study is also limited to the beliefs of teachers about classroom management since it does not give us definite information about the actual management practices of teachers in classes. However, Good and Brophy (2000) argue that teachers' personal belief system guides his/her choices of classroom management approaches, and teachers' beliefs are the best indication of their future decision-making in the classroom (Pajares, 2002). This approach is derived from cognitive learning theory that emphasises a child's capacity to lead his or her own learning and thinking, developing self-automaticity (Lerner, 2003). Cognitive learning theorists perceive learning as a process. Thus, they are concerned more about individual differences than individual academic outcomes. Current classrooms are more student-centred (learning-centred) since educators recently have been affected by the principles of cognitive theory and constructivism, which emphasise the importance of learners' construction of knowledge or an effective student-centred classroom where students are encouraged to develop their own meaning (Lerner, 2003).

Gender and Teachers' Awareness of Strategies for Teaching Pupils/Students with Learning Disabilities

Kakabaraee, Arjmandnia and Afrooz (2012) investigated teachers' awareness of strategies for identifying children with learning disabilities in the province of Kermanshah. The study adopted the descriptive survey design among 291 primary school teachers selected using multi-stage sampling to elicit data, analysed using the inferential statistics of a t-test. The study revealed a significant difference between gender and teachers' awareness or knowledge of the aetiology of learning disabilities among students. Also, the study found that female teachers are more disposed than male teachers to identify students with learning disorders. This agrees with the study by Fatahi and Andbil (2007), which proved that male teachers, in most cases, do not have an appropriate awareness of the cause and nature of learning disability. Conversely, Rojalili (2008) stated that both male and female teachers are appropriately aware of the conditions of students with learning disabilities. Based on this, such teachers without such awareness of the students with learning disabilities are encouraged or advised to make a conscious effort at increasing their knowledge about learning disabilities. Corroborating this view, Bansal (2014) recommended that orientation programmes and workshops need to be conducted so that teachers (male and female) can diagnose the problem of children or students with learning disabilities and intervene accordingly.

Barr et al. (2012) conducted an experimental study on the effect of teachers' awareness on strategies for improving students with learning disabilities' reading comprehension ability. The purpose of the study was premised on examining the interactive effects of the instructional strategies (as treatment) on the improvements of students (both male and female). Data collected were analysed using a mixed-method factorial design. The study found that female teachers are readily aware of strategies (like computer exercises, inference, text structure awareness, main idea identification, and summarisation) to effectively teach and improve the reading comprehension ability of students with learning disabilities in grades 7 and 8 (12- 14 and 13-15-year-olds). However, the study also found that instructional strategies like computer exercises did not help female students with dyslexia in grades 9 and 10 (14-16 and 15-17-year-olds), while the expository texts and not the narrative ones improved the reading comprehension ability of students in grades 9 and 10 (14-16 and 15-17-year-olds).

Jitendra, Burgess and Gajria (2011) investigated teachers' awareness of cognitive instructional strategies for improving the expository text comprehension of students with learning disabilities. The study adopted the descriptive survey design on a cross-sectional sample of 180 teachers in secondary schools who were administered a structured questionnaire, analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. The result indicated that both male

and female teachers were aware of the role of thinking, remembering, analysing, recalling, reasoning, and articulation (as cognitive instructional strategies) for improving the comprehension and understanding of students with learning disabilities. However, the study found that female teachers were rated higher than their male counterparts in their possibility of facilitating an early intervention for helping students with learning disabilities (such as incapability to read, write, spell, calculate, etc.) in each class. The study recommended, thus, that school teachers are required to be familiar with or aware of the appropriate and timely educational and rehabilitation measures for teaching and improving the comprehension of students with learning disabilities, which abound and exist in most secondary schools.

This study, therefore, investigates the impacts of gender on teachers' awareness of specialised teaching strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities. It seeks to determine whether male and female teachers differ significantly in their understanding, attitudes, and application of specialised instructional approaches. Teaching students with learning disabilities (LD) requires teachers to possess a high level of awareness and proficiency in specialised instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction, individualised education plans, multisensory learning, scaffolding, and the use of assistive technologies. These approaches are essential for addressing the unique educational needs of learners with disabilities and for fostering inclusive classroom practices. The researcher keenly observed that female teachers often display higher awareness and more positive attitudes toward inclusive practices, possibly due to gendered differences in empathy and nurturing roles compared to their male counterparts. Students with learning disabilities may not receive the specialised instructional support necessary to achieve academic success, leading to poor educational outcomes and widened inequalities within the school system. Despite increasing emphasis on inclusive education and teacher capacity development, it is unclear whether gender differences significantly influence teachers' awareness and use of specialised teaching strategies for learners with learning disabilities. Understanding this relationship is crucial for developing equitable teacher training programs and ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, benefit from effective, inclusive classroom practices.

The study aimed to examine the impact of gender on teachers' awareness of specialised teaching strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities in inclusive schools in Obio/Akpor L.G.A. In more specific terms, the study intends to:

1. Determine the extent of teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in inclusive schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
2. Determine the extent to which gender makes a difference in teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in inclusive schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent are teachers aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?
2. To what extent does gender make a difference in teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

The following hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

H01: Gender does not make any significant difference in teachers' awareness of strategies used in teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consisted of all the 734 teachers in all the 28 primary schools and 1,342 teachers in the 17 junior secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government. A sample of 615 subjects or respondents participated in the study. The multistage sampling technique was in four phases. In the first phase, the proportionate sampling technique was used in the selection of 30 schools (via 19 primary schools and 11 secondary schools) in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area to be used for the study. The composition of schools (primary and secondary schools). Secondly, Taro Yamane's Formula was used to estimate the minimum sample size that was used from the population of 734 primary school teachers and 1342 teachers in the 17 junior secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. The calculation gave 259 as the minimum estimate of the sample. Thus, the number of respondents that was used during the survey was 285, because

it is advisable to use a sample size higher than the minimum estimate given by the formula. Thus, the number of respondents that was used during the survey was 330. In the third phase, the random sampling technique was used in the selection of 285 primary school teachers (i.e. 15 teachers each) from the 19 selected primary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. In the fourth and final phase, 330 teachers (30 teachers each) were selected from the 11 secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. This constituted a sample of 285 teachers in 19 primary schools, and 330 teachers in 11 junior secondary schools (totalling 615 teachers) that was selected across the 30 schools (i.e. 19 primary and 11 secondary schools) in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Teachers Awareness and Use of Strategies Inventory" (TAUSI). The validity of the TAUSI instrument was determined by the researcher's supervisor and 2 other experts or lecturers in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling (particularly, Educational Measurement and Evaluation) in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The comments, suggestions and observations of these validators were considered during the final construction of the instrument. The reliability of the TAUSI instrument was determined or ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha (α) method. The TAUSI instrument was administered to a sample of fifty (50) respondents (50 teachers). Upon completion, the TAUSI instrument was retrieved, coded and analysed using the Cronbach Alpha (α) method to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.816 for the TAUSI instrument. The reliability coefficient that was obtained necessitated the use of the TAUSI instrument for administration. The researcher applied the face-to-face direct delivery technique as the method of data collection to all 615 respondents or teachers. The researcher obtained a letter of identification from the Head of Department before visiting all the 615 respondents who were selected in the 30 schools (i.e. 19 primary and 11 junior secondary schools) in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Out of the 615 copies of the TAUSI instrument administered to the respondents, only 561 (representing approximately a 91% return rate) were validly retrieved copies that were used for the analysis. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions (with a criterion mean cutoff of 2.5), while an independent t-test was used in testing the hypothesis at the significant level of 0.05. All statistical computations were carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent teachers are aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

S/N	Teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students entails:	N = 561		
		Mean	SD	Decision
1	There are pupils\students with learning disabilities in my class	2.31	1.17	NA
2	There are pupils\students with writing difficulties in my class	2.39	1.16	NA
3	There are pupils\students in my class who cannot grip the pen or pencil with their fingers	2.09	1.15	NA
4	There are pupils\students in my class who cannot differentiate some letters of the alphabet while writing, such as small letters b and d``	2.37	1.22	NA
5	There are pupils\students in my class who are always giving excuses during note-taking period, such as I am sick; I want to go to the toilet, etc.	2.39	1.19	NA
6	There are pupils\students in my class who always give their notebooks to their peers to copy for them	2.38	1.21	NA
7	There are pupils\students in my class who always destroy their learning materials such as pens, pencils, and notebooks and later say I don't have a pen or notebook	2.48	1.20	NA
8	There are pupils\students with reading difficulties	2.46	1.12	NA
Grand Mean		2.36	1.18	NA

A= Aware = ≥ 2.50 while NA= Not Aware = < 2.50 .

Table 1 shows the mean rating and standard deviation on the extent to which teachers are aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. It further shows that teachers are not aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students in their class with learning disabilities who always

destroy their learning materials such as pens, pencils, and notebooks and later say I don't have a pen or notebook ($\bar{X} = 2.48$) in item 7, with reading difficulties ($\bar{X} = 2.46$) in item 8, who are always giving excuses during the note-taking period, such as I am sick, I want to go to the toilet, etc. in item 5, and with writing difficulties in my class in item 2 (each with $\bar{X} = 2.39$), who always give their notebooks to their peers to copy for them ($\bar{X} = 2.38$) in item 6, who cannot differentiate some letters of the alphabet while writing, such as small letters 'b and d' ($\bar{X} = 2.37$) in item 4, with learning disabilities in my class ($\bar{X} = 2.31$) in item 1, while the least was that there are pupils/students in my class who cannot grip the pen or pencil with their fingers ($\bar{X} = 2.09$) in item 3. Furthermore, the grand mean score of 2.36 indicates that the teachers are not aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent teachers are aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

S/N	Teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students entails:	N = 561		
		Mean	SD	Decision
9	There are pupils/students that have problems remembering or naming letters, numbers and colours	2.37	1.09	NA
10	There are pupils/student with difficulty in learning new words in my class	2.44	1.16	NA
11	There are pupils/students who lack the ability to form words correctly, such as reversing sounds in words or confusing words that sound alike	2.46	1.06	NA
12	There are pupils/students in my class who avoid activities that involve reading	2.47	1.11	NA
13	There are pupils/students in my class that cannot memorize simple story	2.37	1.17	NA
14	There are pupils/students with difficulties in mathematics in my class	2.51	1.23	A
15	There are pupils/students in my class who are always afraid whenever a mathematical formula is written on the board	2.47	1.31	NA
16	Some pupils/students are always falling sick on the days of the week that the subject mathematics is to be taught in my class	2.29	1.21	NA
17	There are pupils\ students who always avoid activities that involve mathematics in my class	2.29	1.16	NA
18	There are pupils/students in my class who have difficulty counting backwards	2.40	1.17	NA
19	There are pupils/students in my class who have trouble understanding number symbols, like making the connection between ``7`` and the word seven	2.39	1.17	NA
Grand Mean		2.41	1.17	NA

A = Aware = ≥ 2.50 while NA = Not Aware = < 2.50 .

Table 2 shows the mean rating and standard deviation on the extent to which teachers are aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. It further shows that the teachers are not aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students in their class with learning disabilities: that avoid activities that involve reading in item 12, and that are always afraid whenever a mathematical formula is written on the board in item 15 (each with $\bar{X} = 2.47$), who cannot inform words correctly, such as reversing sounds in words or confusing words that sound alike ($\bar{X} = 2.46$) in item 11, with difficulty in learning new words in my class ($\bar{X} = 2.44$) in item 10, who have difficulty counting backwards ($\bar{X} = 2.18$) in item 18, who have trouble understanding number symbols, like making the connection between ``7`` and the word seven ($\bar{X} = 2.39$) in item 19, who have problems remembering or naming letters, numbers and colours in item 9, and that cannot memorize simple story in item 13 (each with $\bar{X} = 2.37$), while the least was some pupils/students are always falling sick on the days of the week that the subject mathematics is to be taught in my class in it in item 16, and some pupils/students always avoid activities that involve mathematics in my class in item 17 (each with $\bar{X} = 2.29$). Although the teachers indicated that they have

strategies for teaching pupils\students with difficulties in mathematics in my class ($\bar{X}=2.51$) in item 14. However, the grand mean score of 2.41 indicates that the teachers are not aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which gender makes a difference in teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area

S/N	Awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities	N = 561						Decision
		Male Mean	Gender SD	Female Mean	Gender SD	Gender Mean	Gender SD	
1	There are pupils\students with learning disabilities in my class	2.27	1.15	2.37	1.21	2.32	1.18	#
2	There are pupils\students with writing difficulties in my class	2.33	1.16	2.52	1.15	2.43	1.16	#
3	There are pupils\students in my class who cannot grip the pen or pencil with their fingers	2.04	1.09	2.12	1.18	2.08	1.14	#
4	Some pupils\students lacks the ability to differentiate some letters of the alphabet, like b and d, while writing	2.34	1.19	2.38	1.24	2.36	1.22	#
5	Some pupils\students are always giving excuses during the note-taking period	2.29	1.18	2.56	1.18	2.43	1.18	#
6	There are pupils\ students in my class who always give their notebooks to their peers to copy for them	2.34	1.17	2.46	1.28	2.40	1.23	#
7	There are pupils\ students who always destroy their learning materials like pens, pencils, etc.	2.48	1.16	2.48	1.22	2.48	1.19	#
8	There are pupils\students with reading difficulties	2.37	1.20	2.62	1.06	2.50	1.18	#
9	There are pupils\students with problems remembering or naming letters, numbers and colours	2.27	1.03	2.43	1.11	2.35	1.07	#
Grand Mean/SD						2.37	1.17	#

(Aware) = ≥ 2.50 while # (Not Aware) = < 2.50 .

Table 3 shows the mean rating and standard deviation on the extent to which gender makes a difference in teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area. It further shows that: in item 1, female teachers with $\bar{X}=2.37$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X}=2.27$) know of pupils\students with learning disabilities in their class, in item 2 female teachers with $\bar{X}=2.52$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X}=2.33$) know pupils\students with writing difficulties in their class, in item 3 female teachers with $\bar{X}=2.12$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X}=2.04$) know of pupils\students in their class who cannot grip the pen or pencil with their fingers, in item 4 female teachers with $\bar{X}=2.38$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X}=2.34$) know of pupils\students who cannot differentiate some letters of the alphabet, like b and d, while writing in their class, and in item 5 female teachers with $\bar{X}=2.56$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X}=2.29$) know of pupils\students who are always giving excuses during the note-taking period in their class.

Similarly, in item 6, female teachers with $\bar{X}=2.46$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X}=2.34$) know of pupils\students in their class who always give their notebooks to their peers to copy for them; in item 7, female teachers

and male teachers (each with $\bar{X} = 2.48$) indicated the same level of awareness in knowing pupils/students who always destroy their learning materials like pen, pencil, etc., and disabilities in their class; in item 8, female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.62$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.37$) know that there are pupils/students with reading difficulties in their class, while in item 9 female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.43$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.27$) know that there are pupils/students with problems remembering or naming letters, numbers and colours in their class. Furthermore, the grand mean score of 2.37 indicates that gender did not make any difference in the extent of teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which gender makes a difference in teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area

of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Ojo-Ajapa Local Government Area								
S/N	Awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities	N = 561				Gender Mean	Gender SD	Decision
		Male		Female				
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
10	There are pupils/students with difficulty in learning new words in my class	2.39	1.15	2.47	1.16	2.43	1.56	#
11	Some pupils\students lacks the ability to form and reverse words correctly	2.46	1.09	2.47	.99	2.47	1.04	#
12	Some pupils/students avoid activities that involve reading	2.45	1.11	2.50	1.11	2.48	1.11	#
13	Some pupils\students cannot memorize simple story	2.32	1.14	2.46	1.21	2.39	1.18	#
14	There are pupils\students with difficulties in mathematics	2.47	1.22	2.59	1.25	2.53	1.24	*
15	Some pupils\students are always afraid whenever a mathematical formula is written on the board	2.40	1.33	2.59	1.27	2.50	1.30	*
16	Some pupils\students are always falling sick when mathematics is to be taught in my class	2.25	1.19	2.38	1.23	2.32	1.21	#
17	Some pupils\students always avoid activities that involve mathematics in my class	2.27	1.15	2.32	1.16	2.30	1.56	#
18	Some pupils\students have difficulty counting backwards	2.33	1.19	2.53	1.17	2.43	1.18	#
19	Some pupils\students have trouble understanding number symbols, like making the connection between ``7`` and the word seven	2.36	1.18	2.45	1.14	2.41	1.16	#
Grand Mean						2.43	1.25	*

* (*Aware*) = ≥ 2.50 while # (*Not Aware*) = < 2.50 .

Table 4 shows the mean rating and standard deviation on the extent to which gender makes a difference in teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area. It further shows that: in item 10, female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.47$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.39$) know that there are pupils/students with difficulty in learning new words in her class; in item 11, female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.47$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.46$) know that there are pupils/students in her class who cannot form and reverse words correctly; in item 12, female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.50$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.45$) know there are pupils/students in her class who avoid activities that involve reading, in item 13 female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.46$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.32$) know that there are pupils/students in her class that cannot memorize simple story, in item 14 female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.59$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.47$) know

that there are pupils\students in her class with difficulties in mathematics, and in item 15 female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.59$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.40$) know that there are pupils\students in her class who are always afraid whenever a mathematical formula is written on the board.

Similarly, in item 16, female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.38$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.25$) know that there are pupils\students who are always falling sick when mathematics is to be taught in the class; in item 17, female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.32$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.27$) know that there are pupils\students who always avoid activities that involve mathematics in the class, in item 18 female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.53$ more than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.33$) know that there are pupils\students that have difficulty in counting backwards in their class, while in item 19 female teachers with $\bar{X} = 2.45$ more classes than the male teachers (with $\bar{X} = 2.36$) know that there are pupils\students who have trouble understanding number symbols, like making the connection between ``7`` and the word seven. Furthermore, the grand mean score of 2.43 indicates that gender did not make any difference in the extent of teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Gender does not make any significant difference in teachers' awareness of strategies used in teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Table 5: Summary of T-test Analysis on how gender makes a significant difference in teachers' awareness of strategies used in teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	p-value	Decision
Male	202	58.4208	9.64681	6.219	559	0.013	S
Female	359	58.1727	10.80364				

Decision rule: if $p < .05$ reject H_0 , else retain H_0 . NS = Significant, $p > .05$, * significant, $p < .05$

Table 5 shows that gender has a statistically significant difference or influence on teachers' awareness of strategies used in teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area ($t_{(559, .025)} = 6.219$, $p = 0.013$). The null hypothesis was rejected. The mean difference was relatively close but in favour of the male teachers. The implication is that both the male and female teachers differ in their awareness of strategies used in teaching pupils and students with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government.

Discussion

The result in Table 1 revealed a grand mean score 2.96 which indicated that the extent teachers' are aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students' with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area includes: there are pupils\students in my class who always give their note books to their peers to copy for them, there are pupils\students in my class who are always giving excuses during note taking period such as am sick, I want to go to the toilet etc., there are pupils\students in my class who always destroy their learning materials such as pen, pencil and note books and later say I don't have a pen or note book, there are pupils\students with reading difficulties, there are pupils\students with writing difficulties in my class, there are pupils\students with learning disabilities in my class, there are pupils\students in my class who lacks the ability to differentiate some letters of the alphabets while writing such as small letter `b and d`, and there are pupils\students in my class who cannot grip the pen or pencil with their fingers. This finding is in agreement with Oluranti (2014), who stated that teachers' awareness of pupils and students with learning disabilities would help them to devise programmes and classroom activities that will help to stimulate students' attention, memory, and interest. This will assist them to overcome their areas of difficulty or challenges in taking notes, comprehending, listening, speaking, reading, writing and carrying out mathematical calculations.

The result in Table 2 revealed a grand mean score of 3.15 which indicated that the extent teachers' are aware of strategies for teaching pupils and students' with learning disabilities in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area includes:

there are pupils\students with difficulties in mathematics in my class, there are pupils\ students in my class that are always afraid whenever mathematical formula is written on the board, there are pupils/students who always avoid activities that involves mathematics in my class, there are pupils\students who are always falling sick on the days of the week that the subject mathematics is to be taught in my class, there are pupils\ students in my class that have difficulty in counting backwards, there are pupils\ students in my class that cannot memorize simple story, there are pupils\student with difficulty in learning new words in my class, there are pupils\ students in my class that avoid activities that involves reading, there are pupils\students who lacks the ability informing words correctly such as reversing sounds in words or confusing words that sound alike, there are pupils\ students in my class who have trouble understanding number symbols, like making the connection between ``7`` and the word seven, and there are pupils\students that have problems remembering or naming letters, numbers and colours. This finding is consistent with Guyit *et al.* (2016) who stated pupils and students with learning disabilities have problems or phobia for mathematics and mathematical formula, including difficulty in counting numbers, counting backwards, memorizing simple story, forming words correctly, understanding symbols, including having difficulty in learning new words and engaging in class activities like writing, reading, questioning, playing, and other socialization activities.

Conclusion

The study examined the impact of gender on teachers' awareness of specialised teaching strategies for students with learning disabilities in inclusive schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Findings revealed that teachers generally demonstrated a low level of awareness of strategies for identifying and supporting learners with learning disabilities, such as differentiated instruction, individualised education plans, and the use of assistive technologies. This low awareness suggests a significant gap in teachers' professional preparedness for inclusive education. Furthermore, the study established that gender had no significant influence on teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities. Both male and female teachers displayed similar levels of awareness, indicating that the challenge of inadequate knowledge and application of inclusive instructional practices is not gender-specific but rather systemic—stemming from insufficient training, limited exposure to inclusive education practices, and inadequate institutional support. The study underscores the urgent need for continuous professional development and targeted training programs that will enhance teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and competencies in implementing effective instructional strategies for learners with disabilities. Strengthening teachers' awareness and skills in this regard is essential to achieving the goals of inclusive education and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which emphasises equitable and quality education for all learners regardless of their abilities or challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should endeavour to enhance their capacity and proficiency, improving the awareness or discovery of different forms or ways pupils and students manifest traits of learning disabilities in them.
2. Male teachers should be patient and tolerant (like their female counterparts) in their dealings with pupils and students in their various classes irrespective of their different learning peculiarities.

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