

Assessment of Academic Performance in English Language among Students with Hearing Impairment in Special Schools in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study assessed academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. Descriptive research design was used for the study. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study comprised 126 students with hearing impairment from senior special schools in Rivers State. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select a target figure of 45 hearing impaired students for the study. The research instrument was a self-designed instrument titled: "Hearing Impairment Questionnaire" (HIQ) and English Language Performance Questionnaire" (ELPQ) were used for data collection. The reliability coefficient for (HIQ) and (ELPQ) were $r=0.82$ and $r=0.83$. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the

research questions while Independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that; age influences academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. That gender does not influence academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. That there is significant difference in the mean performance in English language among younger and older students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. That there is no significant difference in the mean performance in English language among male and female students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. It was recommended among others that; the government also should make effort to expand training in special needs education for hearing impaired students by establishing more special needs colleges and universities as the academic performance of students with hearing impairment keeps increasing.

Keywords: Assessment, academic, performance, hearing, impairment, English

Introduction

Advocacy from global community regarding the needs of people with disabilities are increasing. There is growing demand for fundamental policy changes to shift the focus on to the importance of developing inclusive education for all members of the society. Examples of such policy documents are Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion (UN) and the earlier Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO). Chodi (2020) noted that these documents advocate for inclusive education at a global level with Nigeria inclusive. One of the initiatives is to ensure education for all children, including children with special needs in mainstream schools, a concept known as inclusive education. Inclusive education is commonly associated with the education of children with disabilities or special educational needs in mainstream schools (Millward, 2019).

In practice, inclusive education means the integration of learners who are children with special needs and who are often taught in special classes or schools to be taught in mainstream schools or classes. The guiding principle of inclusive

education is that all schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional or other conditions. Bharis (2019), noted that schools have to provide inclusive educational opportunities for all regardless of their differences and needs, that students with disabilities (physical, mental, psychological and various learning disabilities) must get equal access to formal education. All over the world, people living with disabilities are recognized as a group of vulnerable people. Disability is described as impairment in the human body structure or function, activity limitations, and participation restrictions (Millward, 2019). A significant 15% of the world's population lives with various forms of disability, out of which 360 million persons have hearing impairment of all kinds with a ratio of 91% adults and 9% children (Millward, 2019). Persons with hearing impairment are mostly categorised as deaf or hard of hearing based on the severity of their hearing loss which might be permanent or fluctuating and may range from mild hearing loss, moderate hearing loss to profound deafness (Shemesh, 2019).

Hearing loss is however, the loss in the ability to hear only 25 or less decibels of sound (Duthey 2021). Forty-two population based studies worldwide estimate that hearing loss among children is greater in Sub-Saharan Africa as compared to other parts of the world (WHO 2012). There are special programmes and welfare services such as healthcare and education offered to enhance the social functioning of children with hearing impairment in societies all over the world (Westley, 2018). These services are enshrined in various international conventions and national laws such as the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD, 2006).

The provision of education as a social welfare service serves as an effort to ensure that persons with hearing impairment do not feel limited in terms of privileges and opportunities to become productive, employable and have successful and independent future. Kyere (2019), states that education is a tool to empower the hearing impaired to lead an independent life. Empowerment through education begins at the basic level where skills and essential knowledge are acquired through taught programs in aid of preparing students for a higher level of education (Oduro, 2019). Progress from one level of education to another is dependent on the academic performance of the student. As a result, there is greater need to

emphasize the academic performance of all students, including those of persons with hearing impairment. In line with Ubani (2020) who observed that, there are more than two thousand students enrolled in various special schools in Nigeria.

Students with hearing impairment are students within an educational setting who have been diagnosed with hearing loss. In Nigeria, the academic performance of students with hearing impairment at the basic level of education is tested through teacher/continuous assessment, promotional examination and external examinations such as West African Examination Council (WAEC) (Hesa, 2017). The results from these assessments are used to promote students with hearing impairment to the next level of their education. Results from such assessment tests have been analysed in several researches to come up with conclusions about the general academic performance of students with hearing impairment.

In Ghana, Aidido (2018), found that only a small percentage of students with hearing impairment were able to pass BECE well enough to gain admission into senior high school which might have been as a result of several challenges faced by this students with hearing impairment. Consequently, because of the small number of students with hearing impairment climbing the educational ladder, there is a general misconception among some teachers, parents and lay persons that hearing loss is interrelated to lack of intelligence which prevents them from higher academic achievement (Vernon, 2021). Vernon (2021), insisted that in total, there are about 50 comparative researches on the knowledge of students with hearing impairment. Results from these researches show that the academic performance of students with hearing impairment is below satisfactory levels (Qi & Mitchell, 2018). It is also evident that the students with hearing impairment in Nigeria and across Africa have low academic performance (Maduekwe, 2019).

In addition, studies in Western English speaking countries have shown poor academic performance of students with hearing impairment in subjects such as English and Mathematics (Qi & Mitchell, 2018). Also, most students with hearing impairment in African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda, Malawi, Namibia and Democratic Republic of Congo and Ghana leave "school around the 10th grade (Obaro, 2018). In Nigeria Maduekwe (2019), further highlights the fact that there is poor academic performance among students with

hearing impairment especially in English language as compared to their hearing mates. Poor performance in English Language is likely to affect their performance in other core subject such as Science, Social Studies and also Mathematics since these subjects are taught, written and read in English.

The poor academic performance of students with hearing impairment can be attributed to the challenges which they face in their education. A number of studies have proven that students with hearing impairment perform below average when compared with their hearing mates (Drever, 2018). Since there is limited literature and research on the assessment of academic performance of students with hearing impairment in Nigeria especially at the secondary school level, this research sought to contribute to the body of knowledge by assessing the academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Like in many other countries, students with hearing impairment have consistently trailed behind their hearing counter parts in academic performance. Poor academic performance in national examinations like West African Examination Council (WAEC) continued to be an indicator of the poor quality of education for students with hearing impairment. Majority of these learners rarely make 6-Credits including English Language and Mathematics. Only a small percentage of these students in Rivers State, who acquire primary education, proceed for further education at secondary schools and even university education. The academic performance of students with hearing impairment have been a major concern of governments, parents, and all stakeholders of education within and outside of Rivers State. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) Chief Examiner's Report since 2014 to 2018 were constantly on students with hearing impairment poor language expression, poor comprehension and summary skills in English language, grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, inappropriate use of vocabulary in their writings, as well as poor understanding of the questions, concepts and procedures. This problems have prompted the researcher to carry out an assessment of academic performance English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to carry out an assessment of academic performance English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study intended to:

1. Assess the academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State based on age.
2. Assess the academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State based on gender.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What is the academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State based on age?
2. What is the academic performance English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State based on gender?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean performance in English language among younger and older students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State
2. There is no significant difference in the mean performance in English language among male and female students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State

Methodology

This study adopted the Descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised 126 students with hearing impairment from senior special schools in Rivers State. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select a target figure of 45 hearing impaired students for the study. The research instrument was a self-designed instrument titled: "Hearing Impairment Questionnaire" (HIQ) and English Language Performance Questionnaire" (ELPQ). Section A contained the demographic data of the students while section B was structured on a four point modified Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and

Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively. Section B had a total of 22 items. The reliability coefficient of (HIQ) and (ELPQ) were $r=0.74$ and $r=0.78$ respectively and were determined using the test-retest method. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Independent sample t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One: What is the academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State based on age?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation showing academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State based on age

S/ N	Question Items	13-18		19-Above	
		Years		N=17	
		N=28	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	SD
1	Been young in a special school has an impact on my academic performance	3.01	0.87	2.93	0.75
2	Haven started my schooling very early in a special school aid in boosting my academic performance	3.15	0.73	3.20	0.99
3	The more I grow the more I understand my studies better which improves my performance in schools	3.36	0.66	3.19	0.58
4	I am able to use sign language better as I grow which aids my performance in school	3.02	0.75	2.83	0.31
5	My being male/female has no significant impact on my academic performance	2.10	0.92	2.97	0.84
6	Been with friends of same sex motivates me to study in special school which boost my performance in school	2.67	0.54	3.98	0.73
7	My same sex friends encourage me to study which aids in my academic performance	2.92	0.64	3.14	0.76
8	I am comfortable seeing my same sex friends in school which encourages me to cope with my academic challenges thus improving my academic performance	2.50	0.39	2.54	0.53

9	Staying far from my school affects me in my academic performance	2.56	0.94	2.91	0.41
10	Been given assistance in transportation to school will improve my academic performance	3.00	0.49	2.88	0.48
11	The distance from my home to school affects my academic performance	2.74	1.07	2.77	0.41
12	Persons in my neighbourhood encourage me which improves my academic performance	2.88	1.10	2.67	0.57
Grand Mean/SD		2.51	0.91	2.90	0.87

(Survey Data, 2023)

Table 1 shows the academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State based on age. Specifically the result in the table shows a grand mean for (persons aged 13-18 years as $\bar{X} = 2.51; SD = 0.91$), and (persons aged 19 years and above as $\bar{X} = 2.90; SD = 0.87$) which is higher than the criterion mean of (>2.50). This further indicates that age influences academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State.

Question Two: What is the academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State based on gender?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation showing academic performance of students with hearing impairment in English language in an inclusive educational environment in Rivers State based on gender

S/ N	Question Items	Male N=33		Female N=12	
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
1	Been young in a special school has an impact on my academic performance	2.88	0.56	2.51	0.93

2	Haven started my schooling very early in a special school aid in boosting my academic performance	2.61	0.77	2.63	0.93
3	The more I grow the more I understand my studies better which improves my performance in schools	1.89	0.98	1.71	1.03
4	I am able to use sign language better as I grow which aids my performance in school	1.02	0.81	2.04	0.88
5	My being male/female has no significant impact on my academic performance	1.72	0.60	2.07	1.10
6	Been with friends of same sex motivates me to study in special school which boost my performance in school	2.74	0.58	2.79	0.90
7	My same sex friends encourage me to study which aids in my academic performance	2.01	0.90	2.06	1.40
8	I am comfortable seeing my same sex friends in school which encourages me to cope with my academic challenges thus improving my academic performance	2.12	0.88	1.96	0.85
9	Staying far from my school affects me in my academic performance	2.36	1.00	2.00	0.94
10	Been given assistance in transportation to school will improve my academic performance	2.31	0.74	2.31	0.70
11	The distance from my home to school affects my academic performance	2.06	0.90	1.71	1.06
12	Persons in my neighbourhood encourage me which improves my academic performance	2.09	0.93	2.05	0.91
Grand Mean/SD		2.09	0.85	2.01	0.52

(Survey Data, 2021)

Table 2 shows the academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State based on gender. Specifically the result in the table shows a grand mean for (male respondents' as $\bar{X} = 2.09$; $SD = 0.85$), and (female respondents as $\bar{X} = 2.01$; $SD = 0.52$) which is less than the criterion mean of (<2.50). This further indicates that gender does not influence academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the mean performance of younger and older students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State

Table 3: T-test analysis showing significant difference in the mean performance of younger and older students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State

Age	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	P-value	Remark
13-18years	28	2.51	0.91	43	0.000	Significant
19-Above	17	2.90	0.87			

(Survey Data, 2023)

Table 3 shows that the P-value is 0.000 and at 43degrees of freedom. Since the P-value (0.000) is less than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is significant difference in the mean performance of younger and older students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the mean performance of male and female students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State

Table 4: T-test analysis showing significant difference in the mean performance of male and female students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	P-value	Remark
Male	33	2.09	0.85	43	0.080	Not Significant
Female	12	2.01	0.52			

(Survey Data, 2023)

Table 3 shows that the P-value is 0.080 and at 43degrees of freedom. Since the P-value (0.080) greater than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean performance of male and female students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding of research question one (Table 1) revealed that age influences academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. And hypothesis one (Table 3) reveals that there is significant difference in the mean performance in English language among younger and older students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. The finding are in line with the revelation of Babatola (2017) who narrated that students with hearing impairment are students with mild, moderate or profound hearing loss and such loss in hearing has dire impact in their academic and social performance. Babatola (2017) maintained that it’s a fact that students with hearing loss were often found to perform below their normal hearing counterparts that such tendency in the decline in academic performance was subject to the age of the child and was dependent on other factors such as the availability or lack of availability of learning materials, sign language interpreter, parental support among others.

The finding of research question two (Table 2) revealed that gender does not influence academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. And hypothesis two (Table 4) reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean performance in English

language among male and female students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. The findings are in tandem with the opinion of Traxler (2018) who observed that special needs students such as the students with hearing impairment need special care and attention. Traxler (2018) maintained that not been able to communicate freely with other members of the society is a major obstacle that affects the general productivity of male and female hearing impaired learners as such special teachers should endeavour to pay sufficient attention to this category of learners.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that age influences academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. That gender does not influence academic performance in English language among students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. That there is significant difference in the mean performance in English language among younger and older students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State. That there is no significant difference in the mean performance in English language among male and female students with hearing impairment in special schools in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. The government through the Ministry of Education should train more special needs teachers for hearing impairment and post them to special schools across the state to assist already existing staff in the education of special needs students with hearing impairment.
2. The government also should make effort to expand training in special needs education for hearing impaired students by establishing more special needs colleges and universities as the academic performance of students with hearing impairment keeps increasing;
3. The government should ensure adequate supply of teaching and learning resources such as textbooks, sign-language dictionaries, hearing aids as well as visual materials to further boost the academic performance of students with hearing impairment;

4. The school should establish a resource room for hearing impaired students where hearing impaired students either male or female could use their extra time to engage in activities that would boost their academic performance.

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