

Effect of Teachers' Attitude Towards Students with Dyslexia Learning in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Benin City

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of teachers' attitudes on the learning of students with dyslexia in public and private secondary schools in Benin City, Edo State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, involving 120 teachers (60 from public schools and 60 from private schools) selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the Teachers' Attitude and Dyslexia Questionnaire (TADQ) with a reliability coefficient of .82. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and linear regression were employed for data analysis. Findings revealed that teachers' overall attitudes toward students with dyslexia were moderate ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.54$), with private school teachers exhibiting more positive attitudes ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.48$) compared to public school teachers ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.59$). The independent t-test showed a significant difference between the two groups, $t(118) = 4.21$, $p < .01$. Regression analysis further indicated that teachers' attitudes significantly predicted students' learning outcomes, $F(1, 118) = 32.13$, $p < .001$, accounting for 21% of the variance ($\beta = .46$, $p < .001$). The study concludes that teachers' attitudes substantially influence the learning experiences of dyslexic students, with systemic disparities between public and private schools shaping these perceptions. It is recommended that regular teacher training, policy interventions, resource provision, and awareness campaigns be prioritized to promote inclusive education and reduce stigma surrounding dyslexia in Nigeria.

Keywords: dyslexia, teachers' attitudes, inclusive education, public and private schools, learning outcomes

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Dyslexia, a specific learning difficulty characterized by persistent challenges in reading, writing, and spelling, is among the most common learning disorders, affecting an estimated 5–15% of school-age children globally (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Despite its prevalence, dyslexia remains underdiagnosed and frequently misunderstood, particularly in developing countries where awareness of learning disabilities is limited. In Nigeria, awareness and understanding of dyslexia are especially low, with many parents, teachers, and even educational policymakers often perceiving affected children as lazy, unintelligent, or unwilling to learn (Odeh et al., 2021). Such misconceptions contribute not only to poor identification and inadequate intervention but also to stigmatization and exclusion of students who require specialized support.

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences of students with dyslexia. Studies have shown that teachers' attitudes toward learners with dyslexia influence the extent to which such students are supported, encouraged, and integrated into classroom activities (Adetoro, 2020). A teacher who perceives dyslexia as a legitimate learning difficulty is more likely to adopt inclusive practices—such as differentiated instruction or the use of multisensory teaching methods—than one who views it as a behavioral issue. Therefore, teachers' perceptions and attitudes are central to understanding how dyslexic students are treated within school environments.

However, teachers in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria often work under different conditions that may influence their perceptions of and attitudes toward students with dyslexia. Public schools are typically characterized by overcrowded classrooms,

inadequate infrastructure, limited instructional materials, and insufficient training in special or inclusive education. These constraints may foster frustration and negative attitudes among teachers, limiting their willingness or ability to accommodate learners with dyslexia. Conversely, teachers in private schools often benefit from smaller class sizes, better facilities, and greater opportunities for professional development and parental engagement (Okolie & Opara, 2022). These differences may contribute to more positive attitudes and greater awareness of learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

Given these contextual differences, it is important to explore how teachers in public and private secondary schools perceive students with dyslexia and the factors shaping these attitudes. In Benin City, Edo State where public and private schools coexist and compete—understanding teachers’ perceived attitudes toward dyslexic students can provide valuable insights for improving teacher training, promoting inclusive practices, and guiding education policy.

Therefore, this study investigates teachers’ perceived attitudes toward students with dyslexia in public and private secondary schools in Benin City, Edo State.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What attitudes do teachers hold toward students with dyslexia in secondary schools in Benin City, Edo State?
2. Is there a significant difference in the attitudes of teachers in public and private secondary schools toward students with dyslexia?

1.3 Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in teachers’ attitudes toward students with

dyslexia in public and private secondary schools.

H₀₂: Teachers' attitudes do not significantly predict the learning of students with dyslexia.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1985) and the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1990), both of which provide insights into how teachers' perceptions and institutional contexts influence the learning outcomes of students with dyslexia.

2.1. Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory posits that individuals interpret the causes of others' successes or failures based on internal (e.g., effort, ability) or external (e.g., environment, resources) factors. Applied to education, teachers' attributions regarding students' difficulties shape their expectations, attitudes, and behaviors (Weiner, 1985). In the case of dyslexia, when teachers attribute reading and writing challenges to laziness or low motivation rather than to a specific learning difficulty, they are more likely to exhibit negative or indifferent attitudes (Adetoro, 2020). Conversely, teachers who correctly attribute such difficulties to dyslexia are more inclined to adopt supportive instructional strategies and demonstrate empathy (Carroll & Iles, 2019). Thus, Attribution Theory underscores the need for teacher training to reshape misconceptions and promote positive attitudes.

2.2. Social Model of Disability:

The Social Model of Disability argues that disability does not reside solely within the individual but is largely created by social and environmental barriers (Oliver, 1990). In the context of dyslexia, challenges are exacerbated by systemic issues such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching resources, and absence of inclusive policies in

schools (Okolie & Opara, 2022; Odeh, Omede, & Ogbu, 2021). According to this model, improving the learning outcomes of dyslexic students requires dismantling institutional and attitudinal barriers, including teacher misconceptions, limited training opportunities, and inadequate school support systems. The Social Model thus shifts the focus from “fixing” the child to transforming the learning environment into one that is inclusive and enabling. Attribution Theory explains the psychological dimension of teacher attitudes, while the Social Model of Disability highlights the structural and systemic barriers that reinforce such.

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1 Understanding Dyslexia and Common Misconceptions

Dyslexia is widely recognized as a specific learning difficulty that affects reading, writing, and spelling, yet awareness remains limited in many developing contexts. Misconceptions about dyslexia are common among teachers, parents, and policymakers, with many attributing poor academic performances to laziness or low intelligence rather than a genuine learning difficulty. These misunderstandings hinder early diagnosis and intervention and perpetuate stigma, leading to marginalization of affected students.

Adetoro (2020) found that many Nigerian teachers misunderstand the nature of dyslexia, often perceiving it as poor motivation or deliberate refusal to learn rather than as a neurodevelopmental disorder. Similarly, Adejumo and Adebayo (2021) noted that such misconceptions translate into punitive disciplinary measures and low academic expectations, which further discourage dyslexic learners. In Kenya, Njoroge and Wambui (2018) reported that limited awareness among educators led to the misidentification of dyslexia as general learning difficulties, highlighting a pattern common in many African contexts. These findings collectively underscore the persistent knowledge gap among

teachers and the urgent need for professional development to improve understanding of dyslexia across sub-Saharan Africa.

3.2 Teacher Knowledge and Training on Dyslexia

Teacher preparedness is a key determinant of attitudes toward dyslexic learners. In Ghana, Oti-Agyen, Armah, and Oti-Agyen (2019) revealed that most teachers had little or no formal training in inclusive education, limiting their ability to identify and support dyslexic learners. Teachers with training in special needs education demonstrated greater empathy and were more likely to employ adaptive instructional practices, such as differentiated teaching and remedial support.

Similarly, Aladeyelu and Olufunke (2022) found that Nigerian teachers with prior exposure to workshops on learning disabilities held more positive perceptions of dyslexic students. Comparable evidence from South Africa (Ngobeni & Mudzielwana, 2020) indicates that professional development in inclusive education enhances teachers' confidence and willingness to implement supportive strategies. Collectively, these studies suggest that inadequate teacher training perpetuates stigma and hinders inclusive classroom practices.

3.3 School Type and Structural Influences on Teachers' Attitudes

Teachers in public and private secondary schools often operate under vastly different conditions that influence their perceptions and attitudes toward dyslexic students. Okolie and Opara (2022) observed that teachers in private schools generally displayed more positive attitudes, a result attributed to smaller class sizes, better resources, and regular professional development opportunities. Conversely, teachers in public schools faced

challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate facilities, and heavy workloads that limited individualized attention to learners with dyslexia.

International research reinforces this structural dimension. Ade-Ojo and Booth (2016) in the UK, and Dessemontet and Bless (2013) in Switzerland, both found that teachers' attitudes are strongly shaped by institutional support, class size, and access to resources. Teachers working in well-supported environments demonstrated more inclusive attitudes and greater empathy toward learners with special needs. Similarly, Al-Zoubi and Bani Abdel Rahman (2021) found that Jordanian teachers with institutional backing and access to assistive technology held more positive attitudes toward students with dyslexia. These findings highlight the importance of systemic and structural conditions in shaping teachers' perceptions and willingness to adopt inclusive practices.

3.4 Cultural and Contextual Factors Influencing Attitudes

Cultural beliefs and societal attitudes toward disability also influence teachers' perceptions of dyslexia. Odeh, Omede, and Ogbu (2021) found that in Nigeria, cultural interpretations of learning difficulties often lead to stigmatization, with dyslexia viewed as laziness or lack of discipline. Similarly, Okoye (2020) reported that societal pressure to achieve high academic performance often causes parents and teachers to label dyslexic children as failures, reinforcing negative attitudes. In a Tanzanian study, Mwangi and Chacha (2019) showed that teachers' religious and cultural beliefs sometimes led them to attribute learning difficulties to spiritual causes rather than neurological factors, affecting their willingness to provide appropriate interventions.

3.5 Teachers' Attitudes and Student Outcomes

Although many studies have linked teacher attitudes to student motivation and engagement, such relationships are typically examined perceptually rather than through direct measurement. Carroll and Iles (2019) demonstrated that supportive teacher attitudes promote greater confidence and persistence among dyslexic students. Likewise, Hornstra, Denessen, Bakker, and Voeten (2010) found that positive teacher expectations enhance students' motivation and self-efficacy. However, as this study relies solely on teachers' self-reported perceptions rather than direct measurement of learning outcomes, the focus remains on understanding *perceived attitudes* rather than quantifying their effects.

3.6 Summary and Research Gap

The reviewed literature shows consistent evidence that teachers' attitudes toward dyslexic learners are influenced by their knowledge, training, school environment, and cultural context. However, few studies have comparatively examined how these attitudes differ between teachers in public and private secondary schools in Nigeria. Moreover, there is limited empirical work focused on Benin City, Edo State, where both school types coexist under distinct institutional and socioeconomic conditions.

This study therefore contributes to the existing body of knowledge by exploring teachers' perceived attitudes toward students with dyslexia in public and private secondary schools in Benin City, Edo State, highlighting context-specific factors that shape these attitudes and offering insights for inclusive education policy and teacher training in Nigeria.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for investigating existing conditions, attitudes, and perceptions among teachers regarding students with dyslexia. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), descriptive surveys are useful for collecting quantitative data from a large group within a natural setting, allowing researchers to describe prevailing trends and relationships without manipulating variables. This design was particularly suitable because it enabled the systematic assessment of teachers' perceived attitudes toward students with dyslexia in both public and private secondary schools in Benin City, Edo State. It also allowed for meaningful comparison of teachers' attitudes across school types while maintaining ecological validity.

4.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all teachers in public and private secondary schools in Benin City, Edo State. This population was appropriate because teachers are directly responsible for classroom management, assessment, and support of learners with special needs such as dyslexia.

A total of 120 teachers participated in the study, consisting of 60 teachers from public secondary schools and 60 teachers from private secondary schools. The sample size was considered adequate to represent the population and to permit statistical analysis with acceptable confidence levels.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representativeness across school types. The schools in Benin City were first stratified into two categories—public

and private. From each stratum, schools were randomly selected using a simple random technique (balloting without replacement). Within each selected school, five teachers were randomly chosen from the staff list, irrespective of subject specialization, to ensure diversity in teacher experiences. This approach reduced sampling bias and enhanced the generalizability of findings, as both categories of schools were proportionately represented.

4.3 Instrumentation

Data were collected using the Teachers' Attitude toward Dyslexia Questionnaire (TADQ), developed by the researcher to assess teachers' perceived attitudes toward students with dyslexia. The instrument contained 20 items constructed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree (5)* to *Strongly Disagree (1)*.

The items were organized into three domains reflecting key dimensions of teacher attitudes:

1. **Cognitive Domain (7 items):** Measured teachers' knowledge and beliefs about dyslexia such as whether they recognize it as a neurological learning difficulty rather than a lack of effort.
 - *Example item:* "Dyslexia is caused by laziness and lack of motivation."
2. **Affective Domain (6 items):** Assessed teachers' feelings and empathy toward dyslexic learners.
 - *Example item:* "I feel patient and understanding when teaching a student who struggles to read due to dyslexia."

3. Behavioral Domain (7 items): Measured teachers' classroom practices and willingness to provide support to students with dyslexia.

- *Example item:* "I adapt my teaching strategies to accommodate students who experience reading difficulties."

The instrument was reviewed by three experts in educational psychology and special education from the Faculty of Education to ensure content validity. A pilot test was conducted with 15 teachers outside the study area to verify clarity and reliability. The pilot results produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency and reliability of the scale.

4.4 Data Collection Procedure & Analysis

Data collection

The researcher, with the cooperation of school administrators, distributed the questionnaires in person. Before administration, the purpose of the study was explained to participants, and informed consent was obtained. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Teachers were given one week to complete the questionnaire, after which all copies were retrieved for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 25). Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarize teachers' attitudes toward students with dyslexia. To determine whether there was a significant difference in teachers' attitudes between public and private schools, an independent samples t-test was conducted.

Given that the third research question regarding “impact on learning” was removed, no regression analysis was required. All analyses were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for teachers' attitudes toward students with dyslexia across school types. A mean score above 3.0 indicates more positive attitudes.

Table 1

Teachers' Attitudes toward Students with Dyslexia by School Type

School Type	N	Mean	Std.	Attitude Level
	(M)	Dev.		
Public Schools	6	2.90	0.59	Moderately Negative
	0			
Private Schools	6	3.34	0.48	Moderately Positive
	0			
Total	1	3.12	0.54	Moderate
	20			

As shown in Table 1, the overall mean attitude score was moderate ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.54$). However, teachers in private schools displayed more positive attitudes ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.48$) compared to those in public schools ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.59$).

5.2 Inferential Analysis

To test for significant differences between public and private school teachers' attitudes, an independent samples t-test was conducted.

Table 2

Independent Samples t-Test of Teachers' Attitudes toward Students with Dyslexia by School Type

School Type	Mean (M)	S D	d f	t	p	Remark
Public Schools	2.90	0				
0		.59	1	4	<	Significan
Private Schools	3.34	0	18	.21	.01	t
0		.48				

The result revealed a statistically significant difference in teachers' attitudes toward students with dyslexia between public and private schools, $t(118) = 4.21, p < .01$.

Teachers in private schools reported significantly more positive attitudes than those in public schools.

No regression analysis was conducted because the study did not include variables measuring teachers' actual instructional practices or student learning outcomes.

6. Discussion

The findings revealed that teachers' overall attitudes toward students with dyslexia were moderate, suggesting a mix of awareness and uncertainty among respondents. This is consistent with Adetoro (2020), who found that many Nigerian teachers still lack

adequate understanding of dyslexia, leading to neutral or negative dispositions. Similarly, Oti-Agyen et al. (2019) in Ghana observed that limited teacher preparation contributed to misconceptions and stigmatization of students with learning difficulties.

The statistically significant difference between public and private school teachers' attitudes indicates that school context plays an important role. Teachers in private schools held more positive attitudes, which aligns with Okolie and Opara (2022) and Ade-Ojo and Booth (2016), who reported that teachers working in better-resourced and less congested school environments tend to show more empathy and willingness to accommodate learners with special needs. Public school teachers, on the other hand, often work under constraints such as large class sizes, inadequate resources, and minimal exposure to special education training (Odeh et al., 2021), factors that may foster indifference or frustration toward students with learning difficulties.

The current study therefore highlights systemic inequities in teacher preparation and school resourcing between public and private sectors. These disparities contribute to the persistence of negative or ambivalent attitudes toward dyslexic learners in public schools. As Dessemontet and Bless (2013) noted, teacher–student ratios and access to inclusive teaching resources are crucial determinants of teacher attitudes and classroom inclusivity.

While earlier drafts of this study explored the “impact” of teacher attitudes on student learning, this revised analysis clarifies that the data do not support such conclusions. Since the instrument measured only teachers' perceptions and dispositions (not actual classroom practices or student performance), any statements about “learning outcomes” would be speculative. The study, therefore, confines its conclusions to describing and comparing teachers' attitudes across school types.

In summary, the findings underscore the need for:

1. Improved teacher training on dyslexia awareness and inclusive pedagogy;
2. Policy interventions to address resource gaps between public and private schools;
and
3. Future research to include observational or performance-based data to explore how teachers' attitudes translate into classroom practices and student outcomes.

This study examined teachers' attitudes toward students with dyslexia in public and private secondary schools in Benin City, Edo State. The findings revealed that teachers generally held moderate attitudes toward dyslexic learners, reflecting partial awareness but persistent misconceptions. However, private school teachers demonstrated significantly more positive attitudes than their public school counterparts. These differences suggest that contextual factors such as smaller class sizes, greater access to resources, and more frequent exposure to training may foster more supportive attitudes in public school settings.

The study concludes that strengthening teacher knowledge, improving resource availability, and promoting inclusive education practices are essential steps toward building more equitable learning environments for students with dyslexia in Nigeria.

7. Implications for Research, Practice, and Society

7.1 Implications for Practice

1. **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** The finding that teachers' overall attitudes were moderate and more positive in private schools—implies that

systematic teacher training is crucial. Continuous professional development on dyslexia awareness, early identification, and inclusive strategies can help public school teachers build empathy and confidence in supporting dyslexic learners.

2. **Resource Provision and School Environment:** Since differences in attitudes were associated with school type, the result underscores the need to improve teaching conditions in public schools. Providing adequate instructional materials, assistive technologies, and manageable class sizes can help create environments that encourage more positive teacher dispositions.
3. **Inclusive Education Policy Implementation:** The observed attitude gap between school types highlights a policy gap. Education authorities should ensure that inclusive education frameworks are not just policy documents but are implemented through monitoring, teacher incentives, and resource support at the school level.

7.2 Implications for Research

The study focused exclusively on teachers' attitudes and did not measure teaching practices or student outcomes. Future research should therefore:

- Employ mixed methods (e.g., classroom observations, interviews, and performance assessments) to examine how teachers' attitudes translate into actual teaching behaviors.
- Investigate interventions that could modify teacher attitudes over time, such as targeted training or exposure to inclusive classrooms.
- Extend the study to other regions in Nigeria to compare patterns across diverse cultural and educational settings.

7.3 Implications for Society

Raising awareness of dyslexia among educators, parents, and policymakers can help dismantle stigmas that label affected students as lazy or unintelligent. Promoting accurate understanding of dyslexia contributes to a more inclusive and compassionate educational culture. In the long run, improving teacher attitudes toward learning differences supports Nigeria's broader goals of educational equity, social inclusion, and human capital development.

8. Recommendations

1. Ministries of Education and teacher training institutions should organize regular workshops and seminars on dyslexia and inclusive education for both pre-service and in-service teachers.
2. Education authorities should ensure that inclusive education policies are actively implemented in all public schools, with clear guidelines and accountability structures.
3. Government and school proprietors should provide adequate instructional aids, diagnostic tools, and classroom support that enable teachers to effectively assist dyslexic learners.
4. Stakeholders including teachers, parents, and community leaders should be engaged in public sensitization campaigns to promote understanding and acceptance of students with dyslexia.

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