



ROLES OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN EKITI STATE

¹Oluwakemi Stella Olatunbosun, Tolulope Oluwatoyin Olayiwola-Adedoja,
Toyin Olanike Adaramoye & Olutoyin Olufunke Fajobi

Department of Guidance and Counselling
Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria
Corresponding Author: Oluwakemi Stella Olatunbosun
oluwakemi.olatunbosun@fuoye.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This study explores the development and optimisation of support systems for students with learning disabilities (LDs) in selected special schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Prompted by persistent challenges such as limited access to assistive technologies, insufficient teacher training, and weak stakeholder collaboration, the research evaluates existing support structures, identifies implementation challenges, and proposes strategies for enhancing inclusive education. A descriptive research design with a quantitative approach was adopted, involving 120 students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings reveal that while foundational supports—such as visual aids, special educators, and counselling services—are generally available, significant gaps remain, especially in the provision of captioning services, speech-to-text software, and specialised technological tools. Communication barriers, inadequate collaboration between teachers and parents, and limited teacher training were highlighted as critical obstacles. Despite these limitations, support systems positively influenced academic performance, social integration, and emotional well-being. The study concludes that inclusive education can be strengthened through sustained investments in technology, teacher capacity building, enhanced school-family collaboration, and stronger policy enforcement. It offers a practical framework for improving support services and contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive education in resource-constrained environments.

Keywords: Learning disabilities, Inclusive education, Support systems, Assistive technology, Teacher training, Educational policy

Introduction

Learning disabilities (LDs) are intricate neurological conditions that hinder a student's ability to perform academic tasks at levels expected for their age or educational stage. These disabilities commonly affect reading, writing, comprehension, and mathematics, among other areas (Smith & Doe, 2020). Educational institutions increasingly recognise the necessity of addressing these challenges by developing individualised education plans tailored to the diverse needs of students with LDs (Jones, 2021). Without timely and effective interventions, students with LDs risk



academic underachievement, which can negatively impact their long-term academic performance and self-esteem (Morris et al., 2023).

A well-structured support system for students with LDs necessitates a significant investment in specialised teacher training programs. Teachers are instrumental in identifying and addressing the learning challenges faced by these students, using adaptive instructional techniques (Brown & Clark, 2019). Effective teacher preparedness, encompassing instructional strategies and awareness of LD-related difficulties, significantly enhances students' academic success (Henderson, 2020). Training programs must be strategically designed to equip educators with the requisite tools and methodologies to support students in overcoming their learning barriers (Davies, 2021). Evaluating the satisfaction levels of students with LDs regarding existing support systems is crucial for fostering continuous improvements. Research suggests that when students feel supported and their educational needs are met, there is a corresponding positive impact on their academic achievements and overall well-being. Conversely, inadequate support mechanisms contribute to disengagement and lower educational outcomes (Johnson & Evans, 2023). In Nigeria, efforts toward inclusive education have been strengthened through legislative measures such as the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018, which mandates equal educational opportunities and the provision of necessary accommodations for students with disabilities. However, disparities in the implementation of support systems persist across different regions, largely due to variations in resource allocation and service delivery (Adebisi et al., 2020).

Support systems play a crucial role in the educational journey of students with LDs, including services such as specialised instruction, assistive technologies, counselling, and collaborative efforts among educators, parents, and specialists. These systems are designed to create inclusive learning environments that accommodate diverse educational needs, ultimately fostering academic success and personal development (Smith & Tyler, 2020). Regular assessment and adaptation of these support systems are essential, as periodic reviews help identify areas that require improvement and ensure the effective allocation of resources (Mason & Taylor, 2021). By maintaining a culture of continuous improvement, schools can remain responsive to the evolving needs of students with LDs.

Teachers play an indispensable role in facilitating the academic success of students with LDs. Continuous professional development and training in inclusive teaching strategies enable educators to implement differentiated instruction and create supportive learning environments. Techniques such as breaking tasks into manageable steps and employing multisensory teaching methods cater to various learning styles (Thomas & Green, 2020). Additionally, fostering a classroom culture that values diversity and inclusion can significantly enhance students' learning experiences. Peer interactions and mentoring programs contribute positively by aiding students in developing social skills and fostering a sense of belonging within their school community (Taylor et al., 2020). Peer support mechanisms, including group study sessions and buddy systems, enhance collaborative learning and reduce feelings of isolation. These initiatives contribute to both academic progress and emotional well-being. Moreover, students with LDs often experience



emotional challenges such as anxiety, frustration, and low self-esteem. Access to counselling services and mental health resources helps students build resilience and a positive self-image (Davies & Cooper, 2021). Schools can implement social-emotional learning programs to holistically address these needs, ensuring both academic and emotional support.

Despite these promising interventions, many schools face considerable challenges in implementing effective support systems for students with LDs. A major obstacle is the inadequate financial resources available for investing in human capital and technological infrastructure (Davis & Morgan, 2021). Furthermore, gaps in teacher training programs leave many educators unprepared to address the diverse range of learning disabilities, exacerbating classroom complexities (Khan et al., 2023). Additionally, weak policy enforcement in many schools further hinders the development of comprehensive support systems (Simpson, 2023). Although regulations exist to guarantee equal educational access for students with LDs, discrepancies between policy and practice remain a significant challenge (Nelson, 2020). Strengthening policy enforcement mechanisms can help bridge this gap, fostering more inclusive learning environments (Olson & White, 2021).

In Ekiti State, Nigeria, the need for robust support systems for students with LDs is particularly critical due to the limited availability of specialized resources. Many schools in the region lack essential assistive technologies, and teachers often receive insufficient training to effectively support students with LDs (Adeyemi & Afolabi, 2021). Implementing comprehensive support systems in Ekiti State schools can promote equitable educational opportunities. Collaboration among local education authorities, non-governmental organizations, and community stakeholders is essential in developing sustainable interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced by students with LDs (Olawale, 2022).

However, several barriers continue to impede the provision of adequate support for students with LDs. A significant limitation is the scarcity of specialized teaching and learning resources. The absence of fundamental facilities, such as libraries and assistive technologies, constrains schools' ability to deliver effective, tailored instruction (Eze & Okoye, 2021). The integration of assistive technologies is a crucial component of LD support. These tools include screen readers for visually impaired students, speech recognition software for students with mobility impairments, and communication devices for individuals with speech difficulties. Such innovations foster greater independence and participation in academic activities. Studies indicate that students who utilize assistive technologies demonstrate improved academic performance and engagement with the curriculum (Green & Baker, 2023). Therefore, prioritizing investments in technological tools is indispensable for encouraging inclusivity within learning environments (Miller & James, 2023).

Teacher preparedness remains a critical challenge in ensuring the success of students with LDs. Many educators lack specialised training to identify and effectively support students with diverse learning needs, leading to suboptimal instructional strategies and further academic difficulties. (Afolabi & Abikoye, 2018). Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach,



including investments in teacher training programs centred on inclusive education, the adequate provision of teaching resources, and robust policy enforcement mechanisms that uphold the educational rights of students with LDs (Nguyen et al., 2020). This study explored the development of tailored support systems in Ekiti State to enhance the academic outcomes of students with LDs, thereby contributing to educational equity and long-term success (Akintunde, 2023).

The special schools for individuals with disabilities in Ekiti State include the Government Special School for the Physically Challenged and Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (Eye and Ear) in Ido Ekiti; the Ekiti State Special School for the Blind in Oke-Osun, Ikere; and the Government Special School for the Deaf in Ikoru, Ijero (Ekiti State).

The goal of this study is to examine the development and optimisation of comprehensive support systems for students with LDs, focusing on Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study aims to identify key components necessary for building these systems, such as teacher training, assistive technologies, classroom adaptations, and family involvement, and explore how these factors can be effectively applied to enhance academic outcomes for students with LDs. This research enhances the broader understanding of how educational institutions, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Ekiti State, can create inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of all students.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing awareness of learning disabilities (LDs) in education, many schools, particularly in Ekiti State, Nigeria, continue to face challenges in providing adequate support for students with these needs. Issues such as insufficient teacher training, limited access to assistive technologies, ineffective classroom adaptations, and minimal family involvement have hindered the development of effective support systems. These gaps not only affect students' academic performance but also impact their social and emotional well-being. Without a comprehensive system, students with learning disabilities are left at a disadvantage, limiting their potential for academic success and overall development. This study seeks to address this problem by exploring ways to develop and optimise support systems to better serve learning disabilities in Ekiti State.

Research Objectives

To explore and develop a comprehensive support system that enhances the academic, social, and emotional success of students with learning disabilities. While the Specific Objectives:

- Assess the existing support systems available for students with learning disabilities across various educational settings.
- Investigate the challenges that schools encounter in delivering adequate support to students with learning disabilities.
- Identify the gaps within the current support systems and propose strategies for their improvement.



Research Questions

- I. What types of support systems are currently available for students with learning disabilities in different educational settings in Ekiti State?
 - ii. What challenges do schools face in providing adequate support for students with learning disabilities in Ekiti State?
 - iii. What are the existing gaps in the support systems for students with learning disabilities, and how can they be addressed in Ekiti State?

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted influences on the development of children, particularly those with learning disabilities. The theory identifies five environmental systems—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem—that interact dynamically to shape individual development (Paquette & Ryan, 2020). At the microsystem level, immediate environments such as family, school, and peer groups play a direct role in shaping a student's self-esteem and academic engagement (Smith et al., 2021). The mesosystem, comprising interactions between these microsystems—such as parent-teacher collaboration—can enhance educational outcomes for students with learning disabilities (Gonzalez & Martinez, 2023). The exosystem includes external factors like parental workplace conditions, which, when supportive, can indirectly benefit children's educational experiences (Anderson & Taylor, 2022). The macrosystem reflects broader societal and cultural attitudes, where inclusive policies and reduced stigma are essential to student success (Njoroge et al., 2021), while the chronosystem emphasizes the importance of changes over time—such as educational reforms or socio-economic shifts—in shaping long-term outcomes (Walker, 2024).

Applying this theory calls for a multisystemic approach to support students with learning disabilities. At the family level, parents must be equipped to provide nurturing environments and advocate effectively for their children's educational needs (Kim & Park, 2023). Schools are critical actors within the microsystem, responsible for implementing individualized education plans and inclusive teaching strategies (Hernandez et al., 2020). Communities, as part of the exosystem, should offer complementary services like tutoring and counseling (Davis & Jones, 2023), while societal attitudes and policies in the macrosystem must be reshaped through awareness campaigns and robust legal protections (Okechukwu & Adeyemi, 2022; Taylor, 2023). Assistive technologies can enhance support across systems, empowering students in both academic and social domains (Wang et al., 2024). Training educators through ongoing professional development is essential for meeting diverse learning needs (Smithson et al., 2023), and longitudinal research at the chronosystem level is crucial to track and refine these interventions over time (Allen & Carter, 2024). Ultimately, Bronfenbrenner's model underscores the need for cohesive collaboration among family, school, community, and society to create inclusive environments that promote the well-being and academic success of students with learning disabilities (Johnson & Lee, 2023).



Materials and Methods

This study focused on building a support system for students with learning disabilities across three special schools in Ekiti State: Government Special School for the Physically Challenged and Intellectual Disability (Eye and Ear) In Ido-Ekiti, Ekiti State Special School for the Blind in Oke-Osun, Ikere-Ekiti, and Government Special School for the Deaf in Ikoru, Ijero-Ekiti. A descriptive research design was adopted, employing a quantitative method using questionnaires administered to students with learning disabilities. The study explored existing support systems, the challenges students face, and ways to enhance their academic, social, and emotional development. The target population comprised 232 students with learning disabilities from the three schools, and a stratified random sampling technique was used to select 120 students from the government special school for the deaf and the government special school for the physically challenged. This sampling ensured representation across diverse age groups and disability types. Data collection was carried out using a self-structured questionnaire known as the student support systems questionnaire (sssqs), which addressed demographic details, the availability and effectiveness of support systems, the challenges faced by students, and their perceptions of how well the systems support them. Section a of the questionnaire gathered demographic data; section b assessed the availability of support systems using a two-point likert scale (available, not available); section c focused on challenges using a four-point likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree); and section d measured students' perceptions of academic, social, and emotional support using the same four-point likert scale. To ensure validity, the instrument was reviewed by special education experts and pilot-tested with a small group of students. Reliability was confirmed using the test-retest method with 20 students from the government special school for the blind in Ikere-ekiti. Data collection spanned four weeks, with appropriate support provided to participants to aid comprehension, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means were used to analyze the quantitative data. Ethical considerations were strictly observed; informed consent was obtained from students and their guardians, confidentiality was guaranteed, and participation was entirely voluntary, adhering to ethical standards for research involving vulnerable populations.

Results

Demographic Data of the Respondents

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents N = 120

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	52	43.3
Female	68	56.7
Age (years)		
Below 10 years	14	11.7
10-12	24	20.0
13-15	25	20.8
16-18	19	15.8
19 and above	38	31.7



Disability		
Dyslexia	44	36.7
Attention hyperactivity disorder	31	25.8
Autism spectrum disorder	38	31.7
Other disability	7	5.8

Table 1 reveals demographic information about the respondents. Gender distribution among the respondents is not balanced, as 52 are males, representing 43.3%, and 68 are females, representing 56.7%. There are more female respondents than male students included in the study. The table also shows the frequency distribution of the respondent's age. It shows that the respondents below 10 years are 14, representing 11.7%; those between the age ranges of 10-12 years are 24, which represent 20.0%; those within the age range of 13-15 years are 25 in number, representing 20.8%; those within the age range of 16-18 years are 19, representing 15.8%; while the respondents at 19 years and above are 38, representing 31.7% of the entire sample. Majority of the participants fall between the age ranges of 13 and 15 years. The participants indicate their type of disability. 44 participants representing 36.7% indicated dyslexia, 31 participants representing 25.8% indicated attention hyperactivity disorder, 38 participants representing 31.7% indicated autism spectrum disorder, while 7 participants representing 5.6% indicated other disabilities.

Research Question One: What types of support systems are currently available for students with learning disabilities in educational settings in Ekiti State?

Table 2: The types of support systems that are currently available for students with learning disabilities in educational settings

S/N	Items	Not available	Available	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Sign language interpreters for classroom communication	24 (20.0%)	96 (80.0%)	.80	.402	Available
2.	Special education teachers trained in sign language or alternative communication methods	33 (27.5%)	87 (72.5%)	.73	.448	Available
3.	Visual aids (e.g., charts, pictures, and videos) to aid in understanding	28 (23.3%)	92 (76.7%)	.77	.425	Available
4.	Captioning services for videos or multimedia content	63 (52.5%)	57 (47.5%)	.48	.501	Not available
5.	Speech-to-text software (e.g., Google Dictate, Otter.ai)	61 (50.8%)	59 (49.2%)	.49	.502	Not available
6.	One-on-one tutoring with visual or non-verbal instruction methods	55 (45.8%)	65 (54.2%)	.54	.500	Available
7.	Access to assistive technology devices (e.g., communication boards, tablets with speech apps)	39 (32.5%)	81 (67.5%)	.68	.470	Available
8.	Use of visual cues and non-verbal instructions in the classroom	56 (46.7%)	64 (53.3%)	.53	.503	Available
9.	Counseling or social skills training, with a focus on non-verbal communication	25 (20.8%)	95 (79.2%)	.79	.408	Available
10.	Collaboration with parents/guardians to ensure consistent communication and support	34 (28.3%)	86 (71.6%)	.73	.467	Available
				Average mean	0.65	

Criterion Mean = 0.5; $\bar{x} < 0.5$ not available; $\bar{x} > 0.5$ available



Table 2 shows that the mean value ranges from 0.80 to 0.48, with an average of 0.65. The criterion mean of 0.5 was used to evaluate the types of systems that are currently available for students with learning disabilities in educational settings. The average mean of 0.65 implies that a basic system is available. 10 items were used to measure this aspect. In relation to sign language interpreters for classroom communication, a significant proportion of respondents (20.0%) agreed that it is not available, and 80.0% indicated that it was available. 72.5% indicated the availability of special education teachers trained in sign language or alternative communication methods, while 27.5% disagreed. 76.7% of the respondents indicated the availability of visual aids such as charts, pictures, and videos to aid understanding, while 23.3% disagreed with the availability. A lower number of 47.5% agreed to the availability of captioning services for videos or multimedia content, while the majority (52.5%) indicated non-availability. An average of 54.2% consent to the availability of one-on-one tutoring with visual or non-verbal instruction. There is availability of access to assistive technology devices such as communication boards and tablets with speech apps as indicated by 67.5%, while 45.8% did not. An average of 53.3% agreed with the availability of visual cues and nonverbal instructions in the classroom. As it relates to counselling or social skills training with a focus on nonverbal communication, 79.2% agreed with its availability, while 20.8% did not. 71.6% agreed to the availability of collaboration with parents/guardians to ensure consistent communication and support. All the items were indicated as available except for captioning services for videos or multimedia content and speech-to-text software, which the majority indicated as not available.

Research Question Two: What challenges did schools face in providing adequate support for students with learning disabilities in Ekiti State?

Table 3: The challenges schools face in providing adequate support for students with learning disabilities

S/N	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD	Rank
1.	Communication barriers between students and teachers or peers	38 (31.7%)	44 (36.7%)	30 (25.0%)	8 (6.7%)	2.70	.914	1 st
2.	Insufficient collaboration between parents, teachers, and special education staff	30 (25.0%)	53 (44.2%)	21 (17.5%)	16 (13.3%)	2.19	.964	2 nd
3.	Inconsistent availability of one-on-one support or tutoring	273 (14.7%)	1116 (60.3%)	414 (22.4%)	48 (2.6%)	2.16	.953	3 rd
4.	Lack of awareness of specific needs by classmates and peers	24 (20.0%)	68 (56.7%)	15 (12.5%)	13 (10.8%)	2.14	.863	4 th
5.	Difficulty with interpreting speech-to-text or sign language software	34 (28.3%)	52 (43.3%)	23 (19.2%)	11 (9.2%)	2.09	.917	5 th
6.	Limited or inadequate social skills training programs	35 (29.2%)	49 (40.8%)	28 (23.3%)	8 (6.7%)	2.08	.890	6 th
7.	Difficulty in accessing visual aids or multimedia content (e.g., lack of captions)	36 (30.0%)	51 (42.5%)	21 (17.5%)	9 (7.5%)	2.05	.868	7 th
8.	Lack of teacher understanding or training in supporting students with learning disabilities and hearing impairments	35 (29.2%)	42 (35.0%)	32 (26.7%)	11 (9.2%)	2.04	.883	8 th



9.	Limited access to specialized assistive technology or devices	29 (24.2%)	69 (57.5%)	14 (11.7%)	8 (6.7%)	2.01	.794	9 th
10.	Lack of trained sign language interpreters or communication aides	52 (43.3%)	40 (33.3%)	22 (18.3%)	6 (5.0%)	1.85	.895	10 th
Average mean						2.13		

Table 3 reveals some of the challenges schools face in providing adequate support for students with disabilities as perceived by university undergraduates. Communication barriers between students, teachers, or peers, with a mean score of 2.70, were ranked first. Insufficient collaboration between parents, teachers, and special education staff, with a mean score of 2.19, was ranked second. Inconsistent availability of one-on-one support or tutoring, with a mean score of 2.16, was ranked third. Lack of awareness of specific needs by classmates and peers, with a mean score of 2.14, was ranked 4th. Interpreting speech-to-text or sign language software, which has a mean score of 2.09, was ranked 5th. Limited or inadequate social skills training programs, with a mean score of 2.08, were ranked 6th. Difficulty in accessing visual aids or multimedia content (e.g., lack of captions) with a mean score of 2.05 was ranked 7th. Lack of teacher understanding or training in supporting students with learning disabilities and hearing impairments, with a mean score of 2.04, was ranked 8th. Limited access to specialised assistive technology or devices with a mean score of 2.01 was ranked 9th. Lack of trained sign language interpreters or communication aides, with a mean score of 1.85 each, was ranked 10th.

This result further revealed that all ten (10) items had mean scores above the cut-off point (2.5). Therefore, it can be deduced that the challenges schools face in providing adequate support for students with disabilities, as perceived by university undergraduates, are Communication barriers between students and teachers or peers, Insufficient collaboration between parents, teachers, and special education staff, Inconsistent availability of one-on-one support or tutoring, Lack of awareness of specific needs among classmates and peers, Difficulty with interpreting speech-to-text or sign language software, Limited or inadequate social skills training programs, Difficulty in accessing visual aids or multimedia content (e.g., lack of captions), Lack of teacher understanding or training in supporting students with learning disabilities and hearing impairments, Limited access to specialised assistive technology, devices, and Lack of trained sign language interpreters or communication aides.

Research Question Three: What are the roles achieved by the support systems for students with learning disabilities in Ekiti State?

Table 4: Roles achieved by the support systems for with learning disabilities

S/N	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	The support systems help improve my academic performance.	75 (62.5%)	36 (30.0%)	9 (7.5%)	0 (0.0)	3.55	.633	Yes
2	The support systems help me feel more included in the classroom.	50 (41.7%)	61 (50.8%)	8 (6.7%)	1 (0.8%)	3.33	.640	Yes



3	The support systems help me feel more confident in my ability to succeed.	76 (63.3%)	33 (27.5%)	9 (7.5%)	2 (1.7%)	3.53	.710	Yes
4	The support systems help me manage social interactions better.	63 (52.5%)	41 (34.2%)	13 (10.8%)	3 (2.5%)	3.37	.777	Yes
5	The support systems reduce my feelings of isolation in school.	62 (51.7%)	46 (38.3%)	10 (8.3%)	2 (1.7%)	3.40	.715	Yes
6	The support systems help me feel emotionally supported by teachers and peers.	45 (37.5%)	46 (38.3%)	22 (18.3%)	7 (5.8%)	3.08	.890	Yes
7	The support systems help me focus better in class and improve my learning.	74 (61.7%)	37 (30.8%)	7 (5.8%)	2 (1.7%)	3.53	.686	Yes
8	The support systems help me build stronger relationships with my classmates.	46 (38.3%)	60 (50.0%)	8 (6.7%)	6 (5.0%)	3.22	.780	Yes
9	The support systems help me understand and express my emotions better.	47 (39.2%)	56 (46.7%)	10 (8.3%)	7 (5.8%)	3.19	.823	Yes
10	The support systems help me stay motivated and engaged in my studies.	54 (45.0%)	48 (40.0%)	10 (8.3%)	8 (6.7%)	3.23	.867	Yes
Average Mean						3.34		

Criterion Mean = 2.5; $\bar{x} < 2.5$ = Yes; $\bar{x} > 2.5$ = No

Table 4 reveals some of the roles achieved by the support systems for students with learning disabilities and factors militating against online teaching-learning sustainability as perceived by university undergraduates. Students ranked the lack of physical interaction within the class 1st, with a mean score of 3.03. They also ranked the lack of physical interaction with the course lecturer and frequent technology failures 2nd, each with a mean score of 2.98. Poor remuneration and a lack of control over students cheating or plagiarism, with a mean score of 2.90 each, were rated 3rd. Lack of control over students' property rights, with a mean score of 2.87, was ranked 4th. Rapidly changing software or delivery systems, with a mean score of 2.85, were ranked 5th. The increased workload, with a mean score of 2.76, was ranked 6th. Inadequate instructor training with a mean score of 2.83 was ranked 7th, lack of policies or standards for online courses with a mean score of 2.79 was ranked 8th, inadequate pedagogical skills for online teaching with a mean score of 2.73 was ranked 9th, and lack of faculty involvement in course decision-making and time constraints with a mean score of 2.65 each were ranked 10th. Online work not valued for promotion and tenure, with a mean score of 2.45, was ranked 11th; lack of quality curriculum, with a mean score of 2.44, was ranked 12th; and personal anxiety and fear of technology, with a mean score of 2.40, was ranked 13th.

This result further revealed that thirteen (13) items out of sixteen (16) items had mean scores above the cut-off point (2.5). Therefore, it can be deduced that the factors militating against the sustainability of online teaching and learning platforms as perceived by higher education lecturers are lack of physical interaction within the class, lack of physical interaction with the course



lecturer, and frequent technology failures. These factors include poor remuneration, a lack of control over student cheating or plagiarism, and insufficient control over students' property rights. Rapidly changing software or delivery system, increased workload, inadequate instructor training, lack of policies or standards for online courses, inadequate pedagogical skills for online teaching, lack of faculty involvement in course decision-making, and time constraints.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the availability, challenges, and effectiveness of support systems for students with learning disabilities in selected special schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Using structured questionnaires and descriptive statistical analysis, the research focused on three major areas: the types of support systems currently available, the obstacles schools face in implementing these supports, and the impact of these systems on students' academic and emotional development.

Findings revealed that most schools provide foundational support systems, including visual aids, assistive technologies, special education teachers, counseling services, and one-on-one tutoring. These provisions reflect increasing efforts toward educational inclusion, echoing the assertions of Eke and Adamu (2021) that tools such as visual supports and trained personnel enhance learning accessibility for students with disabilities. Likewise, Mavrou and Meletiou-Mavrotheris (2020) noted that mainstream schools are adopting multi-modal instructional strategies to cater to diverse learning needs. The widespread availability of such support structures suggests positive strides toward equitable education. However, significant gaps were identified, particularly in the availability of advanced assistive tools such as captioning services and speech-to-text software—resources critical for students with auditory or communication impairments. This finding aligns with UNESCO's (2022) observation of continued underinvestment in digital accessibility tools in low- and middle-income countries. Lawson and Allman (2023) further reported that many schools lack the infrastructure and skilled personnel necessary to effectively implement these technologies, often due to funding constraints and policy limitations. These deficiencies point to a persistent digital divide that restricts the full realization of inclusive education.

In addition to technological challenges, communication barriers emerged as a major obstacle. Students with hearing or cognitive impairments often struggle with inadequate communication systems, which adversely affect both academic comprehension and social integration. Johnson and Hughes (2022) emphasized that poor communication channels can significantly hinder participation, while Ahmed and Suleiman (2020) highlighted the alienation such students may experience without accessible language support. Furthermore, insufficient collaboration among teachers, special educators, and families was another notable challenge. Adeyemi and Bello (2023) stressed the importance of coordinated efforts in developing and implementing individualized education plans (IEPs), while Frick and Makura (2021) noted that fragmented support often undermines accommodation effectiveness.

Technology-related difficulties extended beyond access to include limited teacher training and inconsistent use of assistive tools. As Adebayo and Olufemi (2020) explained, the potential of



technology in inclusive education remains underutilized due to gaps in teacher competence and device availability. Ugochukwu and Madu (2024) supported this by noting the lack of sufficient training in assistive tech use among educators, leading to ineffective integration. Compounding these issues is the scarcity of sign language interpreters and specialized staff, further limiting the inclusiveness of school environments.

Despite these barriers, the study found that existing support systems significantly enhance academic performance, emotional resilience, and classroom participation. Many students reported that support tools improved their engagement and learning outcomes, which supports findings by Mbatha and Nwosu (2021) and Yusuf and Ibrahim (2022), who linked personalized instruction and inclusive interventions with better cognitive and academic achievements. Beyond academics, support systems also contributed to emotional well-being. Students indicated increased confidence, peer interaction, and a sense of belonging—echoing Chukwu and Adebayo's (2023) and Thompson and Eze's (2020) emphasis on the importance of emotional inclusion in reducing anxiety and marginalization among students with disabilities.

Visual aids, structured learning plans, and counseling services were particularly effective in helping students manage their emotions and stay motivated. Osei and Dankyi (2024) highlighted the psychological benefits of structured support, while Anene and Obinna (2021) found that students who feel supported both emotionally and academically are more engaged and persistent in their learning.

In summary, while the study found that basic support systems are generally available and positively impact students' educational experiences, challenges persist in infrastructure, collaboration, technology integration, and teacher preparedness. Addressing these challenges through enhanced professional development, increased investment in assistive technologies, and stronger school-family partnerships is essential to creating a truly inclusive and supportive educational environment for students with learning disabilities. By bridging these gaps, schools can more effectively meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all learners.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that support systems for students with learning disabilities are moderately available and effective in special schools in Ekiti State. Most students reported access to basic educational and emotional support services, which contribute positively to their academic development and psychological well-being. The presence of trained teachers, visual aids, and counselling programs was among the notable strengths observed.

However, significant gaps remain in the availability of modern assistive technologies and alternative communication tools. The lack of such resources limits the ability of schools to fully accommodate the diverse needs of students with learning disabilities. This shortfall affects the students' learning outcomes, especially those who require specialised digital tools or communication interventions to thrive. Another important conclusion drawn is that the challenges



faced by these schools are not merely infrastructural but also relate to human resource limitations and inadequate collaboration among stakeholders. Communication barriers, lack of awareness among peers, and minimal parental involvement further limit the success of the support systems in place. Despite these limitations, the roles played by the available support systems are notable and beneficial. Students reported improvements in social interaction, emotional stability, and academic motivation. The systems helped reduce isolation and increase engagement in school activities, reflecting their potential when adequately resourced and managed.

The findings of this study suggest that inclusive education for students with learning disabilities can be successful when support systems are well-coordinated, adequately funded, and properly implemented. This calls for a collective effort among educational administrators, teachers, parents, and policymakers to bridge the existing gaps.

Recommendations

Schools should be equipped with modern assistive tools such as captioning services, speech-to-text software, and other digital learning aids to enhance accessibility for students with diverse needs. Regular training programs should be organised for teachers to build their capacity to handle students with learning disabilities through inclusive teaching strategies and effective communication techniques. Strong communication channels should be established between students, teachers, and parents to ensure consistent monitoring and support for both academic and emotional development. Additionally, schools should strengthen parental involvement by actively engaging parents through workshops, regular meetings, and structured feedback systems to promote continuity of support from home to school. The recruitment and deployment of specialised personnel, such as interpreters, counsellors, and special educators, should also be prioritised to reduce teacher workloads and enhance the quality of support services provided. Furthermore, schools should implement peer education and awareness programs to foster inclusion, empathy, and support among students by increasing awareness about learning disabilities within the school community.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study provides up-to-date empirical evidence on the state of support systems for students with learning disabilities in special schools in Ekiti State, thereby enriching the body of knowledge about inclusive education in Nigeria. It identifies specific gaps in support, particularly in the provision of assistive technologies and communication aids and offers a framework for improvement and policy development. By capturing the actual perceptions of students with learning disabilities, the study affords them a voice in research and ensures that proposed interventions reflect their lived experiences. Furthermore, it offers a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by schools in implementing inclusive education, serving as a practical guide for educational planners and administrators in designing more effective support strategies. Ultimately, the research contributes a contextual analysis of how current support systems influence the academic, emotional, and social outcomes of students with learning disabilities, thereby offering important lessons for future studies and informing educational reforms.



REFERENCES

- Adebayo, R., & Olufemi, A. (2020). *Technology integration in inclusive classrooms: Challenges and prospects*. *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 35(2), 101–110.
- Adebisi, R. O., Oyeleye, D., & Adepoju, A. (2020). *The implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria: Policies and challenges*. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 23(1), 58–71.
- Adeyemi, T., & Afolabi, S. (2021). *Assessing inclusive practices in special schools in South-West Nigeria*. *Journal of Educational Development*, 18(3), 32–41.
- Adeyemi, T., & Bello, F. (2023). *Collaboration as a strategy for inclusive education: A case study of Nigerian schools*. *African Educational Studies*, 29(1), 15–27.
- Afolabi, S., & Abikoye, G. (2018). *Teacher competence and inclusive education: A framework for teacher education in Nigeria*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 19(4), 243–254.
- Ahmed, B., & Suleiman, R. (2020). *Communication breakdown and its impact on learning outcomes for students with hearing impairments*. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Psychology*, 12(2), 77–88.
- Akintunde, F. (2023). *Strategies for improving inclusive learning outcomes in special needs education*. *Journal of Education in Africa*, 30(1), 50–64.
- Allen, K., & Carter, L. (2024). *The role of longitudinal research in evaluating inclusive education programs*. *International Journal of Inclusive Studies*, 10(1), 12–26.
- Anderson, C., & Taylor, P. (2022). *Family involvement in education: Impacts of workplace flexibility on parental engagement*. *International Journal of Family Studies*, 18(2), 101–116.
- Anene, A., & Obinna, E. (2021). *Emotional resilience and learning support among students with special needs*. *Nigerian Journal of Counselling*, 13(1), 39–49.
- Brown, J., & Clark, M. (2019). *Differentiated instruction for students with learning disabilities*. *Journal of Inclusive Teaching*, 11(3), 65–74.
- Chukwu, P., & Adebayo, O. (2023). *Peer support and social inclusion in inclusive education*. *International Review of Education and Disability*, 9(2), 91–105.
- Davies, A. (2021). *Teacher preparation and inclusive practices in sub-Saharan Africa*. *Education and Development Review*, 6(4), 118–127.
- Davies, K., & Cooper, B. (2021). *Counselling support for students with learning disabilities: A psychosocial perspective*. *Journal of Educational Counselling*, 14(2), 44–59.
- Davis, J., & Jones, M. (2023). *The role of community-based support programs in special education*. *Journal of Disability and Society*, 16(1), 29–41.
- Davis, L., & Morgan, T. (2021). *Budgetary constraints and inclusive learning: Barriers to implementation in Nigeria*. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 22(2), 77–89.
- Eke, I., & Adamu, M. (2021). *Visual tools and inclusive education in developing nations*. *Global Journal of Special Needs Education*, 10(3), 55–66.
- Eze, J., & Okoye, L. (2021). *Resource availability in Nigerian special schools: A regional comparison*. *International Journal of Educational Resources*, 8(2), 23–34.
- Frick, L., & Makura, A. (2021). *Multidisciplinary collaboration for effective IEP implementation in African schools*. *Inclusive Education Journal*, 17(1), 10–22.



- Gonzalez, R., & Martinez, J. (2023). *Linking school and home: The mesosystem in inclusive education*. *Journal of Educational Systems*, 25(1), 33–45.
- Green, R., & Baker, L. (2023). *Assistive technologies and academic outcomes: A comparative analysis*. *Technology in Special Education*, 12(3), 70–84.
- Henderson, S. (2020). *Improving teaching practices for learners with disabilities*. *Journal of Inclusive Curriculum Studies*, 5(2), 45–58.
- Hernandez, L., Smith, J., & Taylor, K. (2020). *Developing and implementing IEPs in inclusive classrooms*. *International Journal of Special Education*, 19(1), 27–38.
- Igwe, O., & Chukwu, R. (2020). *Parental involvement and inclusive practices: A study of Nigerian primary schools*. *Journal of Parent-School Engagement*, 8(1), 12–24.
- Johnson, A., & Evans, K. (2023). *Evaluating student satisfaction with support services for learning disabilities*. *Journal of Student Well-Being*, 14(1), 22–34.
- Johnson, M., & Hughes, T. (2022). *Barriers to effective communication in inclusive classrooms*. *Journal of Inclusive Pedagogy*, 20(3), 56–69.
- Johnson, R., & Lee, C. (2023). *Creating a collaborative ecosystem for inclusive education*. *Journal of Systems and Learning*, 11(1), 91–106.
- Jones, L. (2021). *The role of individualized education plans in student achievement*. *International Journal of Inclusive Practice*, 13(2), 38–49.
- Kim, H., & Park, Y. (2023). *Parental advocacy in special education: Strategies for empowerment*. *Journal of Family and Inclusive Education*, 9(3), 64–78.
- Khan, S., Bello, R., & Madu, F. (2023). *Teacher preparation and knowledge gaps in supporting learning disabilities*. *West African Journal of Educational Development*, 14(1), 15–27.
- Lawson, M., & Allman, C. (2023). *Bridging the assistive technology gap in African classrooms*. *Journal of Educational Innovation*, 8(4), 88–99.
- Mason, J., & Taylor, R. (2021). *Evaluation strategies for inclusive support systems*. *Education Evaluation Journal*, 12(2), 55–68.
- Mbatha, T., & Nwosu, B. (2021). *Academic outcomes of inclusive learning in Nigerian schools*. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research*, 20(3), 47–60.
- Miller, J., & James, P. (2023). *Investing in inclusive technology: A pathway to equality*. *African Journal of EdTech*, 7(2), 33–45.
- Morris, A., Thompson, E., & Ibe, J. (2023). *Academic outcomes of students with LDs: The role of early intervention*. *International Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 15(1), 18–29.
- Nelson, C. (2020). *The policy-practice gap in inclusive education*. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Education*, 9(1), 25–37.
- Nguyen, T., Ajayi, F., & Musa, H. (2020). *Teacher training programs for inclusive education: A review of African models*. *Education for All Journal*, 6(3), 81–92.
- Njoroge, L., Mwangi, T., & Mugo, M. (2021). *Cultural attitudes and educational inclusion in Kenya and Nigeria*. *Comparative Education Review*, 17(2), 61–75.
- Okechukwu, F., & Adeyemi, S. (2022). *De-stigmatizing learning disabilities through policy and awareness*. *Social Change and Education Journal*, 11(3), 19–32.
- Olawale, S. (2022). *Community involvement in special education: A Nigerian case study*. *Journal of Local Education Development*, 4(1), 42–54.



- Olson, K., & White, D. (2021). *Policy implementation for inclusive education: A global perspective*. *Journal of Comparative Education*, 15(4), 90–104.
- Osei, A., & Dankyi, B. (2024). *Social-emotional support systems for inclusive learners*. *Ghanaian Journal of Special Education*, 10(1), 13–29.
- Paquette, D., & Ryan, J. (2020). *Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and inclusive education*. *Psychology and Education Review*, 24(1), 35–49.
- Simpson, J. (2023). *Policy enforcement in special education: Challenges and solutions*. *International Review of Education Policy*, 7(1), 14–26.
- Smith, A., & Doe, J. (2020). *Cognitive profiles and learning barriers in school-aged children*. *International Journal of Special Needs*, 22(1), 10–23.
- Smith, K., & Tyler, B. (2020). *Designing inclusive support systems for learners with special needs*. *Journal of Learning Support*, 13(2), 27–36.
- Smithson, L., Brown, E., & Adekunle, T. (2023). *Professional development in inclusive pedagogy*. *West African Journal of Education*, 18(2), 88–102.
- Taylor, J. (2023). *Educational policy reforms and inclusive practice in West Africa*. *Policy Futures in Education*, 21(1), 73–84.
- Taylor, M., Green, J., & Odu, K. (2020). *Peer mentoring and academic success for students with disabilities*. *African Journal of Education and Behavioural Sciences*, 12(4), 48–61.
- Thompson, L., & Eze, A. (2020). *Addressing social exclusion in inclusive classrooms*. *Journal of Child Psychology and Inclusive Practices*, 16(2), 36–49.
- Ugochukwu, J., & Madu, H. (2024). *Challenges of assistive tech integration in public schools*. *Nigerian Journal of EdTech Research*, 6(1), 19–35.
- UNESCO. (2022). *Global report on assistive technology access and equity*. UNESCO Publications.
- Wang, L., Oyinlola, F., & Adebola, S. (2024). *Assistive learning technologies in West African classrooms*. *Educational Technology and Inclusion Journal*, 9(1), 58–72.
- Yusuf, M., & Ibrahim, T. (2022). *Enhancing learning through personalized support*. *Educational Psychology Today*, 14(1), 33–47.