

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH VISUAL LOSS IN JUNIOR AND SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

This study investigated psychological and educational needs of students with visual loss in junior and senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study used descriptive design. The study used two research questions and two hypotheses. The population of the study consisted of 98 special students in junior and senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study adopted purposive sampling technique to select 62 students with visual loss. A researcher-developed instrument titled: “Psycho-Educational Needs Questionnaire (PENQ)” was adapted to collect data. PENQ was revalidated by three experts in measurement and evaluation and special needs for visual persons. Cronbach reliability method was used for the reliability, which yielded reliability coefficients of $r=.82$ for PNS and $r=.68$ for ENS respectively. While PENQ yielded a reliability coefficient of $r=.76$. Mean and standard deviation and independent sample t-test were used for the data analyses. The findings, showed that psychological and educational needs of students with visual loss differ between junior and senior secondary schools. Also, there was significant difference in the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary schools. It was recommended among others that schools should design culture friendly individualized educational plans in special and inclusive schools for students be well adjusted. Special needs resource room should be provided in both schools.

Keywords: Vision, disability, psycho-educational needs, junior and senior secondary schools,

Introduction

Students with visual loss sometimes struggle their way through school and make much effort to master the organization of their classrooms or even find their way around the school environment. Inability to see clearly as others also comes with some prominent worries and perhaps some learning limitations (Agomoh & Kanu, 2015). This worries show in their

educational needs and psychological experiences. In this review, visual loss, visual impairment and vision disability will be mentioned in connection. World Health Organization (2015) described visual loss as a decreased ability to see to a degree that causes problems remediable or not remediable by usual means, such as surgery and/ or medicated lens. A visual impairment is described as visual acuity of 20/70 to 20/400 after correction. Worse than 20/400 constitutes blindness (in some places, the cutoff for legal blindness is 20/200). A visual loss can be caused by damage to the eye itself, damage to the visual nerve, or damage to the visual cortex in the brain (Bright-George, 2022b). This is a group of persons with blindness, partial sight, low vision, and other errors of refraction.

The errors of refraction constitutes a diverse group of vision condition of faulty reflection. They are identified as myopia (short-sightedness), hypermetropia (long sightedness), astigmatism (blurred vision), cataract (diseased growth of the eye), and presbyopia (age oriented visual defect) (Bright-George, 2022a). Agomoh and Kanu (2015) indicated that students with partial sight have visual acuity that falls between 20/70 and 20/200 in the better eye with correction. As a result of this, children with partial sight have defective vision, irrespective of the fact that they can read large printed materials and make movement without much difficulties within the school environment. It is a condition caused by eye disease, in which visual acuity is 20/70 or poorer in the better Seeing Eye and cannot be corrected or improved with regular eye treatments. Put simply, low vision is an uncorrectable reduction in vision that interferes with daily functions. Hence, students with low vision have a diminished capacity to carry out academic activities. The various categories of visual impairments no doubt makes it difficult for their students to live, enjoy social security, and receive education like their equals in an inclusive school. They complain of dizziness, headaches, pains in the eye and not seeing well or not seeing at all.

The psychological and educational burdens associated with this condition is bothersome when the need to utilize and stretch one's sight is required in class activities. Students with visual loss (SWVI) should be enrolled in schools under the umbrella of full integration, partial integration, and seclusion or exclusion. Full integration involves bringing special needs learners to play and learn side by side with their own non-special needs equals. The goal is to provide all-in-one and inclusive learning experiences. Partial integration comprises special needs learners spending part of their school hours in regular classrooms with their non-special needs classmates and part of their learning hours in special setting alone to

experience supports. The goal is to provide a balance between specialized support and inclusion in regular schools. Furthermore, seclusion or exclusion involves separating special needs learners from their non-special needs counterparts in their learning and supports. Any of these settings can have adverse effect on the psycho-educational adjustments to their needs (Agomoh & Kanu, 2015; Omede, 2015).

Their educational needs encompass the school, its activities and the ability to cope with the unavailability and availability of instructional equipment and digital resources. While psychological needs refer to the ability to perceive and appreciate the value of emotional, mental, social demands in the learning environment and the characteristics of one's personality in distressing situation, needs arise from disequilibrium between what human nature deems necessary for a healthy living and what the environment provides. The children with visual loss have needs but these needs appear to be based on their type of visual impairment and what the society provides (Maslow, 1954). The intensity and extensity of these needs varies between junior and senior secondary schools that house students with visual loss (Bright-George, 2019).

There exist differences in the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary schools. Junior students need constant emotional support due to dependency, protection from disability bullying, self-awareness, inclusive classroom that encourages diverse bonding, tasks interdependently, integrating emotional support into daily school routines and guidance in social behaviour which call for unbroken socio-emotional supports (Aderibigbe & Alade, 2020). As part of psychological needs, senior students encounter personal-social identity struggles, self-esteem issues, test stress and anxiety, peer acceptance, bullying, labelling, exclusion, personal-social identity, negative influence, poor reinforcement, difficulty fitting in, counselling, self-reliance, anxiety, and societal participation. They may struggle to develop and express appropriate social indicators without inclusive classroom and peer modeling.

Ayeni et al. (2021) found that senior students with low visual face challenges in social acceptance and belongingness, which is pronounced in senior students. They found the need for stress and independence training among senior students with blindness. Onwuchekwa and Ali (2022) found transition fears among senior students with visual loss. They also found that

test anxiety has impact on junior students. Lawal and Adeyemi (2021) discovered that adolescents with vision disability reported future anxiety and transition fears.

Junior students with visual loss require some basic educational needs such as access to braille or large print, blended curriculum, assistive technology, digital information and participating in learning activities, individualized education plans (IEPs), mobility training, extra time to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in examination. Some educational needs of senior students include screen readers or magnification software, to access digital information and participate in learning activities, individualized education plans (IEPs), support, accessible learning environment, braille literacy, mobility training, and extra time in class (Adeyemi, 2022). Adebayo (2024) and Ojo (2021) revealed that senior students with visual loss need accessible learning materials, support from special need teachers, and accessible environment that is free from difficulties and barriers. Adebayo (2021) found that senior students who used accessible learning materials showed improved academic performance, engagement, independence and confidence in their academics. Nwachukwu (2021) found that students who had individualized education plans demonstrated improved academic performance and self-advocacy skills.

Aderibigbe and Alade (2020) found that children with visual loss have unique emotional needs that require support and understanding. Okafor and Emeka (2019) highlighted students' need for psychological preparedness for independent living. To Bello et al. (2023), changes in family emotional involvement during school transition, enhances a shift towards greater independence. Mwangi (2023) showed that students who received career guidance demonstrated increased self-awareness and career aspirations. Students with visual loss in both junior and secondary schools who received support showed increased self-esteem and confidence in their academic work. Ogbonna (2018) found no significant difference over psychological needs of students with visual impairment in special school in terms of class level.

Bright-George (2022) identified counselling gaps in Nigerian inclusive schools. These review suggested that students with visual loss have evolving emotional and educational needs as they transition from junior to senior secondary schools, requiring tailored support and inclusive education practices. Briggs and Bright-George (2024) accentuated the importance

of counselling support among pupils with vision loss. Nwachukwu (2021) found that social skills development is crucial for students with visual loss in special and inclusive schools. There is need for counselling and behaviour analysis to aid the adjustment of learners with vision loss (Ogbonna, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Students with visual loss often experience limited educational needs and psychological sufferings due to unavailability and inaccessibility of supports in Rivers State. The psycho-educational challenges of students with visual loss frustrate their education (Ogbonna, 2018). Despite the fact that, several studies have attempted to address this concern, educational and psychological challenges still influence the students with visual loss and their needs are not met. Poor counselling is affecting both junior and senior students. Consequently, this study investigated psychological and educational needs of students with visual loss in junior and senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the psychological and educational needs of students with visual loss in junior and senior secondary schools. The objectives of the study are to:

1. Investigate the difference in the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State
2. Examine the difference in the educational needs of students with visual loss in between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the investigation:

- 1 What is the difference in the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State?
- 2 What is the difference in the educational needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the educational needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study used descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 98 students in the four special schools in Port Harcourt as at the time of this study. The sample was seventy-six (76) children with visual loss drawn through purposive sampling technique in Rivers State. A researcher-developed instrument titled “Psycho-Educational Needs Questionnaire (PENQ)” was adapted for data collection. The instrument elicited the psychological and educational needs of students with visual loss using twenty-five items. The instrument had two section: A and B. Section A was on personal data of students with visual loss, while B had two sub-scales namely, Educational Needs Sub-scale (ENS), and Psychological Needs Sub-scale (PNS). The instrument contained twenty-five items using a four-point scale of: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The mean rating includes: 1.00 - 1.99, strongly disagree, 2.00 - 2.49, disagree; 2.50-2.99; agreed, 3.00; strongly agree =4.00. However, the criterion mean score of 2.50 was used for agreement of any item.

Contents validity were conducted by experts in measurement and evaluation and special needs education. The items were studied and modified to measure psychological needs and educational needs. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha method. Thirty (30) students with visual loss who were not part of the study were given 30 copies of PENQ. Thereafter, the collated data was analyzed, which produced a reliability coefficient of .82 for PNS and .68 for ENS respectively. While PENQ yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76. The instrument was administered to 76 students with visual loss through the direct delivery and retrieval method with the aid of four research assistants within four weeks. Only sixty-two copies of PENQ were retrieved and used for analysis. Mean and

standard deviation and independent t-test were used for data analyses using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 20).

Presentation of Results

Research question one: What is the difference in the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean of Psychological Needs of Students with Visual Loss between Junior and Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

| SN | Psychological Needs | Junior Sec n=25 | | Senior Sec n=37 | | N=62 Difference /D/ |
|-------------------|---|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | |
| 1 | I want to be mobile | 2.46 | 1.00 | 2.64 | 0.94 | 0.18 |
| 2 | I want to acquire visual experiences of my own | 2.54 | 0.91 | 3.07 | 0.92 | 0.53 |
| 3 | I want to control my environment | 2.20 | 1.00 | 2.96 | 1.00 | 0.76 |
| 4 | I feel I have poor concept about myself | 2.18 | 1.00 | 3.02 | 0.91 | 0.84 |
| 5 | I cannot easily play with others | 2.54 | 0.92 | 2.67 | 0.82 | 0.13 |
| 6 | I find it difficult to socialize with others | 2.63 | 1.00 | 2.48 | 0.98 | 0.15 |
| 7 | I am worried about my personality | 2.86 | 0.71 | 2.90 | 0.96 | 0.04 |
| 8 | I cannot easily reason abstractly | 2.44 | 0.88 | 2.53 | 1.00 | 0.09 |
| 9 | I have some language deficiency | 2.16 | 0.86 | 3.10 | 0.89 | 0.94 |
| 10 | I have poor picture of idea some objects | 2.44 | 0.89 | 2.86 | 0.98 | 0.42 |
| 11 | Integrating my perception experience into meaningful concept is difficult | 2.28 | 0.91 | 2.20 | 1.00 | 0.08 |
| 12 | I am considered as helpless | 2.34 | 0.98 | 2.14 | 0.89 | 0.02 |
| 13 | I am always in an underprivileged social situation | 2.36 | 0.96 | 2.38 | 0.82 | 0.02 |
| Grand mean | | 2.41 | 0.85 | 2.69 | 0.93 | 0.28 |

The result on Table 1 shows the difference of psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary schools in Rivers State. It shows that the grand mean of the junior school students over psychological needs was 2.41, SD=0.85 whereas that of the senior students was 2.69, SD=0.93 indicating a mean difference of 0.28. The result further shows that the respondents differed mostly in language deficiency while the respondents from junior students had a mean of 2.16, SD=0.86 and the senior students had a mean of 3.10, SD=0.89, and with a mean difference of 1.04 and they differed in being considered as helpless where the junior school participants had mean of 2.14, SD=0.98 and their senior

counterparts had mean of 2.34, SD=0.89 indicating a mean difference 0.02. Senior students made more difference.

Ho2 There is no significant difference in the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: Independent sample t-test in the difference of Psychological Needs of Students with Visual Loss between Junior and Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

| School | N | Mean | SD | t | Df | p-value | Sig |
|------------|----|--------|-------|--------|----|---------|-----|
| Junior Sec | 25 | 2.5402 | .5781 | -2.341 | 60 | .022 | S |
| Senior Sec | 37 | 2.894 | .5682 | | | | |

The result from Table 2 shows the independent sample T-test on the difference on the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary schools in Rivers State. It shows that since the p-value of .022 is less than .05 alpha level, there was significant difference on the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State. ($t=-2.341$, $df=60$ $p<.05$). The null hypothesis one was rejected at .05 level of significance.

Research Question Two: What is the difference in the educational needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean of Educational Needs of Students with Visual Loss between Junior and Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

| SN | Educational Needs | Junior Sec =25 | | Senior Sec n=37 | | N=62 Difference /D/ |
|----|---|-------------------|------|--------------------|------|---------------------------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | |
| 14 | I want to identify my major problem | 2.62 | 0.99 | 2.58 | 0.98 | 0.04 |
| 15 | I need to be referred to someone who can be of help | 2.58 | 1.00 | 2.88 | 1.00 | 0.30 |
| 16 | I need screening and assessment of my condition | 2.46 | 0.78 | 2.80 | 0.84 | 0.34 |
| 17 | I want to be placed in a place where I can learn better | 2.42 | 0.91 | 2.68 | 0.82 | 0.26 |
| 18 | The educational management strategies in my school are adequate | 1.99 | 0.60 | 2.44 | 0.59 | 0.45 |
| 19 | I need braille for reading and writing | 3.38 | 0.61 | 3.72 | 0.66 | 0.34 |

| | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 20 | I need mathematical aids | 3.12 | 0.82 | 3.22 | 0.98 | 0.10 |
| 21 | I need aids for physical education | 1.96 | 0.44 | 2.44 | 0.56 | 0.48 |
| 22 | I need special equipment for learning | 2.98 | 0.88 | 3.12 | 0.86 | 0.14 |
| 23 | I need some counselling services | 2.88 | 1.00 | 3.10 | 0.92 | 0.22 |
| 24 | I need supportive services | 2.72 | 0.86 | 3.00 | 0.88 | 0.28 |
| 25 | I need itinerant instructions | 2.76 | 0.84 | 3.08 | 0.79 | 0.32 |
| | Grand Mean | 2.66 | 0.80 | 2.92 | 0.82 | 0.26 |

The result on Table 3 shows the mean of difference of educational needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State. It shows that the grand mean of educational needs of students in the junior school was 2.66, SD=0.80, whereas that of the senior students was 2.92, SD=0.82 with a mean difference of 0.26. Specifically, the result shows that the students mainly differed over need for braille reading and writing where the junior students had mean of 3.38, SD=0.61, whereas their senior counterparts had mean of 3.72, SD=0.66, with a mean difference of 0.48. They however differed least in the educational management strategies in their school are adequate; where the junior students had mean of 1.99, SD=0.60 and their senior counterparts in the secondary schools had mean of 2.44, SD=0.59. The senior students with visual loss made more difference over educational needs.

Ho1. There is no significant difference in the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: Independent sample t-test in the difference of Educational Needs of Students with Visual Loss between Junior and Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

| School | N | Mean | SD | t | Df | p-value | Sig |
|------------|----|------|------|-------|----|---------|-----|
| Junior Sec | 25 | 2.44 | 0.62 | -2.13 | 60 | .0037 | S |
| Senior Sec | 37 | 2.78 | .61 | | | | |

The result from Table 4 shows the summary of independent sample t-test on the difference of their educational needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State. It shows that since the p-value of .037 is less than .05 alpha level, there was significant difference of educational needs of students with visual loss

between junior and senior secondary special schools in Rivers State ($t=2.13$, $df=60$ $p<.05$). The null hypothesis two was rejected at .05 level of significance.

Discussion

The results in Table 1 and 2 show that senior secondary school students with visual loss made more difference over psychological needs. The hypothesis shows a significant difference of the psychological needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary schools. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Onwuchekwa and Ali (2022), who reported transition fears among senior students with visual loss. The study also found that test anxiety has impact on junior students more. This is consistent with the finding of Lawal and Adeyemi (2021) who reported that adolescents with vision disability reported future anxiety and transition fears. Conversely, a study in Port Harcourt by Ogbonna (2018) found no significant difference over psychological needs of students with visual impairment in special schools based on class level. In buttressing the findings, Aderibigbe and Alade (2020) found that children with visual loss in junior section have unique emotional needs that require support and understanding.

Based on this finding, it is evident that students with visual loss in junior secondary schools in Rivers state lack psychological supports in comparison to the students in senior secondary schools. This could be influenced by the age of the students and of family backgrounds. The junior secondary school students reported lacking some basic psychological needs, hence there was difference between their psychological needs and that of the senior students.

The results in Table 3 and 4 indicate that students with visual loss in senior secondary schools made more difference in educational needs. The hypothesis shows a significant difference of the educational needs of students with visual loss between junior and senior secondary schools. The finding is in consonance with Adebayo (2021), who found that senior students who used accessible learning materials showed improved academic performance, engagement, independence and confidence in their academics. In agreement, Nwachukwu (2021) found that senior students who had individualized education plans demonstrated improved academic performance and self-advocacy skills. Mwangi (2023) reported that students with visual loss in secondary schools who received vocational and educational

counselling demonstrated increased self-awareness and career aspirations in relation to the studies.

This finding revealed the difference in educational needs between junior and senior secondary schools students with visual loss in Rivers state. This might have been determined by the level of access to computer application, optical aids, and Braille reading and writing materials, and easy access to facilities. The junior students reported limited access to educational supports and opportunities in comparison to the senior students with visual loss. This calls for the full implementation of inclusive education. Inclusive education can provide useful opportunity to drive positive thinking and integrated quality learning atmosphere for both students with vision disability and those without visual loss. Bringing all students into one learning environment will give them the ability to connect and grow together in positive framework without looking at the physical and structural limitation of anyone in the same class.

Conclusion

Inability to access special needs computer application, optical aids, and Braille reading and writing materials, and school facilities influence the success in academic of the students with visual loss in junior secondary schools. The difference in psychological needs of students with vision loss differed more among senior students due to absence of social supports and counselling services. The difference in the psychological and educational needs of students with visual loss between junior secondary schools and that of those in senior secondary section is disturbing.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommend that:

1. Schools should design culture friendly individualized educational plans in special and integrated schools for students with vision loss to learn and live mentally healthy in junior secondary schools. Special needs resource room should be provided in both schools.
2. Teachers should design their lessons to accommodate the psychological needs of students with vision loss. Both senior and junior students should have access to counselling services.

Implication for Counselling

Counselling should be administered on students with visual loss to bridge the gap between their psychological and educational needs to help them reduce the intensity and extensity of school frustration and barriers. Reality counselling relevant to the needs of the students should address them to learn efficiently. Counselling techniques could be tailored to address stress coping. Solution focused brief therapy can be used to help students to focus on expected solution rather than what they lack. This will enable them live a quality life. Counselling should be tailored towards addressing self-efficacy and resilience against stigma, discrimination and labelling.

Contributions to Knowledge

Junior secondary school students with visual loss demonstrated inability in meeting their psychological needs in schools due to unavailability and inaccessibility of the required supports and resources. The study has revealed that both junior and senior secondary school students with visual loss experienced and expressed their educational and psychological needs differently.

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