

KWASU

International Journal of Education



Website: <https://www.kije.com.ng> ISSN: 2384-6801 Vol. 7 No. 1

KWASU International Journal of Education (KIJ) Vol. 7 Number 1, July 2024



TEACHERS' AWARENESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISABILITY ACT, 2018 IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 attracted considerable attention among stakeholders and plays critical roles in the implementation of the provisions of the Disability Act, 2018 for students with disabilities in Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' awareness and implementation of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools. The study was guided by one research question and three hypotheses. The study adopted a mixed method research known as Explanatory Sequential Design. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 378 respondents from public secondary schools across Kwara State. Teachers' Awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 Questionnaire (TADAQ) and Group Interview was used for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts, all from Faculty of Education, Kwara State University, Malete. Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument, which was 0.76. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions; t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance while thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data collected. Findings revealed that: teachers' awareness of the disability Act 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State was low; there was no significant difference in teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools based on qualifications ($F_{(4,373)} = 1.998, p > 0.05$); there was a significant difference in teachers' awareness

of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary school based on school location (sig = 0.03, $p < 0.05$). Based on the findings, it was recommended that school-based legal awareness programmes should be organized regularly in schools. Attendance at capacity building workshops, seminars and conferences to update teachers' awareness should be made prerequisite for teacher's promotion.

Introduction

Inadequate awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 among teachers might lead to discrimination and exclusion of students with disabilities, hindering their access to quality education. It is therefore essential to assess the current level of teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in schools in order to identify barriers to its effective implementation and improve the educational outcomes of students with disabilities in Nigeria.

Education as a right of students with or without disabilities should be provided without discrimination, and based on equality of opportunity. The provision of education without discrimination is only achievable through inclusive education where every student's learning needs are catered for without differential treatment (Ojuawoet al., 2020). Akinola et al (2024) also affirmed that the attainment of an inclusive society where every member is given equal opportunities to develop his or her potentials and make meaningful contributions to the societal development begins with the removal of discrimination. However, the implementation of inclusive education promises to be successful under a constitutional arrangement which prohibits discrimination and segregation on the ground of disabilities (Osatuyi, 2020).

This constitutional arrangement in this research work is centered on the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 recently enacted by the Federal Government of Nigeria to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and prohibit discrimination against them (FRN, 2019). The Act is hence referred to as the Disability Act, 2018. Despite the enactment of the Disability Act, 2018, it was observed by the researcher from September, 2022 to July, 2024, that students with disabilities are still facing discrimination in getting enrolment into regular schools of their choice or closer to their homes and families. It is also observed by the researcher that the education of students with disabilities is still largely confined to a very few, poorly staffed, poorly equipped and outdated segregated schools. This is an unfair treatment of students with disabilities which infringes on their educational rights.

Over the years, students with disabilities have suffered various forms of discrimination both in school and in the larger society (Ajayi, 2020). The National Teachers' Institute (2018) also averred that students with disabilities in Nigeria are often the most marginalized and isolated group in society, encountering discrimination not only within educational institutions but also from the broader community. When discriminatory practices occur in schools communities, they have detrimental effects on the targeted individuals or groups. Discrimination based on disability may result in students not receiving the necessary accommodations or support they require to succeed academically. This includes limited access to education and denial of enrolment for basic education in regular schools on the ground of disabilities (Ajayi, 2020). Only students with disabilities from rich homes could afford travelling far away from their families and communities in order to receive basic education and thereby incurring high expenses compared to their non-disabled counterparts (Akinola et al., 2024). It is therefore crucial for educational institutions to actively combat discrimination by promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equity among their student body and staff. By fostering a culture of respect and understanding, schools can create an environment where all individuals are valued regardless of their differences.

Efforts to combat discrimination led to the establishment of the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018, referred to in this article as the Disability Act, 2018 was signed into law on January 17, 2019, by the Federal Government of Nigeria for both national and sub-national levels (FRN, 2019). It is a crucial legislation which protects the rights of students with disabilities and prohibits discrimination against them. The legislation ensures the complete inclusion of students with disabilities in society and establishes the National Commission for students with disabilities, empowering the Commission to oversee their education and civil rights, among other duties (FRN, 2019). It establishes legal procedures to handle instances of bias and offers a structure for advancing the rights and well-being of students with disabilities in various fields (Okoro, 2020).

However, public compliance remains a crucial aspect of the Act. Section 6 of the Disability Act, 2018 gives a five-year transitory period from the date of its enactment, the 17th day of January 2019, within which all public buildings or structures (including public schools), whether immovable, movable, or automobile, must be modified and accessible to students with disabilities, including those in wheelchairs (FRN, 2019). It should be noted that the five-year transitory period from January 17th, 2019, had elapsed in January 2024, and non-compliance could be prosecuted in the court of law. According to Michael (2023), "Only 20 out of the 36 states of Nigeria have domesticated the Disability Act, 2018 as of 29th December, 2023." These states include: Abia, Anambra, Bauchi, Cross River, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ondo, Oyo, Plateau, Sokoto, Zamfara states. Yet, students with disabilities suffer discrimination in public schools (Abilu et al., 2020). This attests to the necessity of investigating the level of teachers' awareness of the disability act, 2018 in public secondary schools.

According to Adesokan et al (2022), awareness refers to general information about a particular concept such as the Disability Act, 2018. Teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 remains a very potent strategy for the implementation of the Disability Act, 2018 in schools. According to Madina et al. (2018), **legal awareness plays the most prominent role in the execution of legal rights and responsibilities.** Legal awareness is crucial in ensuring that individuals understand their legal rights and obligations (American Bar Association, 2024). It serves as a guiding force in the implementation of laws and regulations within society (ABA, 2024). Awareness could be created through School-Based Legal Awareness Programmes (SBLAP). School-Based Legal Awareness Programmes involves staging legal campaigns and sensitization within the school for knowledge creation and implementation (Ayeerunet al, 2019). SBLAP is an initiative implemented within the school settings to educate members of the school community about the law, legal rights, and responsibilities (Manga, 2018).

A successful implementation of the Disability Act, 2018 is dependent on the level of teachers' legal awareness of the Act. Although, the Federal Ministry of Information is saddled with the responsibilities of creating awareness and promotion of the rights and dignity of students with disabilities (FRN, 2019); **since five years ago, how well has the society, including the public school communities, been aware of the Disability Act, 2018? It should be noted that effective legal awareness increases and enhances legal knowledge and competency for legal implementation.**

Literature reviewed showed an argument on the level of legal awareness based on qualification. For instance, Ezeaku et al. (2021) discovered that there was no significant difference in teachers' legal awareness on the basis of their qualification. On the contrary, Manjula et al. (2017) had earlier discovered that there was a significant difference in the awareness of legal rights among female teachers on the basis of their qualification. Further attempt will therefore be made to find out whether there is a significant difference in teachers' legal awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 based on qualification.

Furthermore, the location of the school may affect the level of Disability Acts awareness among teachers. It is important to corroborate or disagree with the findings of Manjula et al. (2017) who discovered that there was a significant difference in the awareness of legal rights among female teachers on the basis of their locality. It is therefore necessary to investigate the level of awareness of Disability Act, 2018 among teachers in public schools. The study therefore investigated teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

Students with disabilities are facing various forms of discrimination in getting enrolment in the regular schools of their choices. Most often, students with disabilities have to travel far away from their families and communities in order to receive their education in a segregated school such as Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin; or at times in a regular school with a special unit. This discrimination has further limited their learning opportunities and reduced their inclusion. In spite of the enactment of the Discrimination against persons with disabilities (prohibition) act, 2018 in Nigeria, and the five years transitory period which ended in January, 2024; students with disabilities are yet to be fully included in schools within their neighbourhood.

Various studies have been conducted on awareness of the Disability Act, but none of the previous researchers investigated teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State. This was the gap left behind by previous researchers which this study tried to fill by investigating teachers' awareness and implementation of the Disability Act 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State.

Research Question

The following research question was raised to guide the study.

11. What is the level of teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on qualification.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on school location.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed method research design known as Explanatory Sequential Design. Explanatory sequential design was considered appropriate by the researcher to carry out the research work.

Population of the Study

The population for the study consisted of 21,671 teachers in public secondary school across the three senatorial districts in Kwara State. According to National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria (2019), there were 13,973 Junior Secondary School teachers and 7,698 Senior Secondary School teachers in Kwara state, totaling 21,671.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample size of 378 respondents was drawn from the population.

Instruments for Data Collection

A structured survey questionnaire on Teachers' Awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 (TADAQ) and Group interview were used to gather qualitative data on teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 from the secondary schools selected.

Validity of the Instruments

Face, content and construct validity of the instruments were achieved by submitting the instruments to the researcher's supervisor and three other lecturers in the Department of Special Education, Educational Management and Early Childhood Education, for vetting and assessment. Sequel to their corrections and suggestions, necessary amendments were made and the final drafts of the instruments were submitted to the supervisor, after which they were adjudged suitable and valid for this study.

Reliability of the Instruments

The reliability of the instrument for this study, the test-retest method was adopted by administering ten (10) copies each of the instruments to 10 teachers at two weeks interval. The two sets of scores obtained were computed and correlated, using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient (PPMC). A reliability coefficient scale of 0.76 was obtained and considered appropriate and reliable for use in this study.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher administered the questionnaire and retrieved completed questionnaires through research assistants from teachers in six Senior and Junior Schools in Kwara State. After this, the researcher conducted a group interview with the respondents to expatiate the results of quantitative data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered were statistically analysed using mean, percentage, t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance while thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data gathered. These analyses were achieved by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27 for accuracy.

Results

Research Question: what is the level of teachers' awareness of the disability Act 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State?

Table 1: Table showing the percentage and mean distribution of the level of teachers’ awareness of the disability Act 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN
1	I am well aware of the Disability Act, 2018	30(7.9)	34(9.0)	274(72.5)	40(10.6)	2.1
2	I only read about the Disability Act, 2018	21(5.6)	41(10.8)	195(51.6)	121(32.0)	1.9
3	I heard about Disability Act, 2018 on radio jingles and/or social media	29(7.7)	26(6.9)	211(55.8)	112(29.6)	1.9
4	Sensitization programme has been organized on Disability Act, 2018 in my school	37(9.8)	43(11.4)	194(51.3)	104(27.5)	2.0
11	I am aware that students with disabilities should be treated without discrimination or segregation of any form	26(6.9)	47(12.4)	154(40.7)	151(39.9)	1.9
12	I am aware that students with disabilities should have access to physical learning environment and buildings on an equal basis with others.	14(3.7)	48(12.7)	150(39.7)	166(43.9)	1.8
7	I am fully aware of the details in the Disability Act, 2018	19(5.0)	15(4.0)	189(49.5)	157(41.5)	1.7
8	I am fully aware that students with disabilities should have an unfettered right of access to education in an inclusive setting within their neighborhood	19(5.0)	13(3.4)	210(55.6)	137(36.0)	1.8
9	I am aware of the right, respect, and dignity of students with disabilities.	21(5.6)	15(4.0)	245(64.8)	97(25.7)	1.9
10	I am aware that there are penalties for breaching the Disability Act, 2018.	20(5.3)	38(10.1)	210(55.6)	110(29.1)	1.9
WEIGHTED AVERAGE						1.89

***The figures in parentheses are in percentages.**

***Decision rule: Weighted Average >2.50 = High, and Weighted Average <2.50 = Low.**

Table 1 showed the level of teachers’ awareness of the disability Act 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State. The following shows the level of teachers’ awareness of the disability Act 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State as follows: they are not well aware of the Disability Act, 2018 (2.1), they disagree that they read about disability Act, 2018 (1.9), they also disagree that they heard about the disability Act, 2018 in radio jingles and/or social media (1.9), they disagree that sensitization programme has been organized on Disability Act, 2018 their school (2.0), they do not aware that students with disabilities should be treated without discrimination or segregation of any form (1.9), they do not aware that students with disabilities should have access to physical learning environment and buildings on an equal basis with others (1.8), they were not fully aware of the details in the Disability Act, 2018 (1.7), they were not fully aware that students with disabilities should have an unfettered right of access to education in an inclusive setting within their neighborhood (1.8), they are not aware of the right, respect, and dignity of students with disabilities (1.9), and they were not aware that there are penalties for breaching the Disability Act, 2018 (1.9).

The weighted average was 1.89 which indicated that the calculated mean was less than the fixed mean (1.89 < 2.50). This implies that the level of teachers' awareness of the disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State was low.

Ho1: there is no significant difference in the teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on qualifications.

Table 2: Summary of analysis of variance showing significant difference in teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on qualifications.

Qualification	N	MEAN	STD	F	df	Sig
NCE	25	17.12	1.74			
B.ED	230	16.93	1.11			
MASTER	104	16.63	0.77			
Ph.D	13	16.77	0.44	1.998	376	0.094
OTHER	6	17.00	0.00			
TOTAL	378	16.86	1.06			

* $p > 0.05$

Table 2 showed the summary of ANOVA on teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on qualifications. There was no significant difference in teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on qualifications ($F_{(4,373)} = 1.998, p > 0.05$). Since the calculated F-value was less than the critical F-value for the degree of freedom 4 and 373, and alpha level of 0.05, the hypothesis that state that there is no significant difference in teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on qualifications was not rejected.

Ho2: there is no significant difference in the teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on school location.

Table 3: Summary of t-test result of significant difference in the teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on school location.

	School Location	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t_{cal}	df	Sig	Decision
Teachers' Awareness	Rural	160	16.99	1.26	2.15	376	0.03	Sig
	Urban	218	16.76	0.89				

* $p < 0.05$

Table 3 showed the summary of t-test result on the teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on school location. It was revealed that respondents in rural area had mean 16.99 and standard deviation 1.26 while respondents in urban had mean 16.76 and standard deviation 0.89, the t_{cal} was 1.99, degree of freedom 376 and significant level of 0.03 ($P < 0.05$). The observed p-value was less than the fixed p-value (sig = 0.03, $p < 0.05$). This implies that there was significant difference in the teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on school location, it implies that respondents in rural area were more aware of Disability Act, 2018 than those in Urban. Therefore, the null hypothesis that state that there is no significant difference in the teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State based on school location was rejected.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The analyses of data gathered are presented under relevant headings as follows:

Teachers' Awareness of the Disability Act, 2018

Question 1: Are you familiar with the Disabilities Act, 2018 and its implications for education?

The respondents were asked if they were aware of the Disability Act, 2018. A theme was identified from their responses.

Theme: No, Not at all.

The theme identified was no and not at all. 64 respondents representing 16.9% said that they were aware of the Disability Act, 2018, while 314 respondents representing 83.1% said that they were not aware of the Disability Act, 2018. Majority of the respondents specifically said that "I am hearing about this Disability Act, 2018 for the first time in this research" and "I have never heard of any Disability Act, 2018 before." This shows that the level of teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State was low.

Discussion of findings

Findings of research question revealed that the level of teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State was low. During the group interview with the respondents, 83% of the respondents said they were hearing about the Disability Act, 2018 for the first time. Many of the teachers specifically said "I have never heard of any Disability Act before." This further showed that the level of teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State is low. This corroborated the findings of Erdem (2021) who discovered that teachers' awareness of educational law and professional rights is low. Erdem (2021) justified his discovery by the assertion that the low legal awareness was due to inadequate educational law awareness programmes and inadequate law-related training undergone by the teachers in schools. The low level of teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public schools in Kwara State could be attributed to inadequate sensitization and lack of school based legal awareness programmes on the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State. Disability Act awareness in the Newspapers is not effective and grossly inadequate because many teachers are yet to read about the Disability Act, 2018 in the print. There is need for more innovative means of creating awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State.

Findings hypothesis 1 showed that there was no significant difference in teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary school Kwara State based on qualifications. This finding was disagrees with Manjula et al. (2017) who asserted that there is a significant difference in the awareness of legal rights among female teachers on the basis of their qualification. Most teachers in public secondary schools in Kwara State attended regular teachers' training institutions such as Universities and Colleges of Education. They must have been introduced to special education for awareness. However, the Disability Act, 2018 is a new legal framework to establish inclusive education for students with disabilities. Most teachers in Kwara State might not be aware of its existence due to inadequate awareness programmes, inadequate capacity building workshops on the new Disability Act and non-implementation of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State.

Findings hypothesis 2 revealed that there was significant difference in the teachers' awareness of Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary school Kwara State based on school location. This

finding agrees with the findings of Manjula et al. (2017) who discovered that there is a significant difference in the awareness of legal rights among female teachers on the basis of their locality. This implies that teachers in public secondary schools located in the rural areas might be less aware of the Disability Act, 2018 while those in the urban areas might be better informed. On the contrary, the findings of this study showed that teachers in the urban areas are less aware of the Disability Act, 2018 than those in the rural areas. This implies that working in rural areas does not preclude the teachers from sourcing for educative information either from online or in the news.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 in public secondary schools in Kwara State. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that teachers' awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 was low. Teachers' low awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 adversely affected the students with disabilities, the teachers and the society at large. For students with disabilities, the adverse effect includes discrimination, exclusion, segregation, and denial of human rights. For teachers, the adverse effects include litigation and illegal educational practices while the society lost a promising part of her 'instrument per excellence,' and turning out graduates with disabilities who have no sense of belonging in the society having been segregated in schools.

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

1. The Federal Ministry of Information saddled with the responsibility of creating awareness of the Disability Act, 2018 should periodically organize Disability Act 2018 awareness campaign in schools.
2. Government should regularly organize capacity building programmes on the Disability Act, 2018 and related educational laws for teachers in service in order to improve their knowledge of the Disability Act, 2018.

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