



# INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF STUTTERERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN OWERRI

OLAYI JAMES EBURIKURE, OPARA UCHE, EWA J. E. AND EGBUZIEUZO JENNIFER C.

Email: [olayi.je@gmail.com](mailto:olayi.je@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [jenniferchioma99@yahoo.com](mailto:jenniferchioma99@yahoo.com)<sup>4</sup>

(Received 20, March 2024; Revision Accepted 21, June 2024)

## ABSTRACT

This study investigated influence of school environment on learners with stuttering in an inclusive school in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive research design the study adopted simple random sampling technique to select 115 identified learners with stuttering from across. questionnaire on influence of environment on learners with stuttering from 10 schools with inclusive education program, (boys 62 and girls 53). The ten itemed questionnaire was administered to the respondents, data obtained from the respondents was analyzed using independent T-test and mean statistical tools at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that impact of stuttering influences negatively on learners with stuttering. With the result showing a composite mean value of 3.12 indicating a much higher outcome than the benchmark score of 2.50 expected of learners generally. Also, there was significant mean score difference in the learning experience of male and female learners who are stutterers as male students are much more affected by stuttering disorder than female learners in the studied schools. Therefore, it was recommended that students who are stutterers should endeavour to participate fully in classroom teaching and learning experience and practice their reading repeatedly so as to develop the capacity to master the pronunciations of words, sounds and syllables.

**KEYWORDS:** Learning Experience, Inclusive Education Programming; Stuttering

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an education philosophy that gives every individual intending to learn the opportunity to have equitable access to quality education regardless of any developmental or

situational circumstances that might serve as barrier to preventing them from acquiring knowledge and developing their intellectual competences. Inclusive education gives everybody the privilege to be educated undermining diversity and without

**Olayi James Eburikure**, Department of Special Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

**Opapa Uche**, Department of Special Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

**Ewa J. E.**, Department of Special Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

**Egbuzieuzo Jennifer C.**, Department of Special Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

discrimination. Inclusive education gives learners the opportunity to allow all learners the ability to progress and gain experiences that is worthwhile and beneficial to each not withstanding their differences. Similarly, it provides for learners competences and ability to communicate with one another by improving on their social and academic balance.

However, it is natural that a typical school learning environment can be scary for most children as first timer in the school environment is full of anxiety and the fear of the unknown. Often, the teachers, students and other significant stakeholders in the school system become part and parcel of the pupils/students life. In the case of learners who stutter their experiences can be full of frustration and anguish. When students stutter, they might be temporarily incapable to express themselves due to the disruption created by the impact of stuttering.

When this happens, stuttering students replicate syllables, words and words gets stuck completely on a word or both and often visibly struggling to make an impact. Thus, students who stutter face distinctive learning challenges in class, schools or even in private discussions at home. They may experience social difficulties, also in school, children who stutter are often rated as less popular and given names by school mates and even teachers this circumstantial experience could make them express shyness and shame become anxious and may stop speaking in class or sit at the back of the classroom to avoid being noticed. These sets of students might be particularly classmates and even teachers making them feel inferior to others sensitive to evaluation by teachers or peers, and may answer "I do not know" for fear stuttering (Onslow, 2022).

The negative effect of stuttering could assume a compounding nature of. Impacts on student's developmental wellbeing and their learning competence. Stuttering is a speech disorder that can alter the coherence of expressed speech, sound or ideas communicated by a stuttrer because stuttering is often associated with unpleasant repetition of pronounced words, difficulty in articulating sounds, stretching of words while pronouncing them. This experience is always anxiety laden, (Olayi 2016) more than

60 million people stammer and students who stutter are often jested at and the consequences are always the feeling of frustration, dejection, anger, and expressed aggression. Stuttering is classically termed as uncontrolled dysfluency in oral expression. Typically, stuttering is marked as repetition of words, sounds or syllables, or prolonged pauses in between sounds and words during verbal communication between people and this experience can be expression of negative emotions by the affected person as it impairs their self-concept personality, identity, self-esteem and academic attainment (Learning Loft. 2019).

Khan (2015) noted that human environment has considerable impact on the development of stuttering. This is premised on the fact that an environment that is demanding and stressful could cause children to have difficulties in articulating developing fluent speech. Although school learning environment does not cause stuttering, it could negatively influence a student who is deficient in speeches to develop the capacity to be fluent in speech making. However, stuttering causes strain in speech making and it is consistently characterized by stressful repetition in pronouncing words, syllables, sounds or phrase. For example, "to-to-to-tomorrow". Prolongations are the abnormal lengthening of continuant sounds, for example, "mmmmmmilk": for milk: (i.e., ca-ca-ca-cat), sound prolongations ("sssss-salad," "ffffff -fish") etc. A stutrer may express a number of physical reactions, including tension of the muscles involved in speech (tongue, jaw, lips, or chest) and tension in muscles not related to speech (such as shoulders, limbs, and forehead). In addition to these physiological reactions, people who stutter will often have negative emotional reactions to the disorder. Among these emotional reactions are embarrassment, guilt and frustration are more common.

Marder (2020) found that students who stutter expresses social discomfort during classroom teaching and learning process and during interaction with peers and significant others in and outside the classroom setting. Stutters inability to competently pronounce words without disruptions make them have compounding challenge. For example Marder stated that a stutrer once emailed her teachers before coming to school and intimated them as thus:

"It takes a bit for me to say what I want to say." She wrote, "so please have some patience with me." This projects the fact that this student could be experiencing nervousness in front of his/her classmates when called out to speak or read and understanding her weakness she sought the patience and support of her teacher. The expectation here is for the teacher to help these student find ways to participate effectively in teaching and learning process in a manner that they find joy in communication.

This implies that social communication difficulties often experienced by students who stutter could make them prone to being teased or bullied at school, and become unnecessarily quiet, withdrawn, nervous, shy and anxious<sup>1</sup> preferring to be unnoticed. This is often their situations as stutters find it awfully hard to speak in front of the class. Reading aloud in class, speaking, asking questions, or making presentation among their peers during classroom tasks can easily cause them to express anxiety and stress and because of this, they might pretend in class that they do not know the answers to questions their teachers' ask them as to avoid embarrassment. Thus, when students who stutter is in situations that requires them to verbally communicate with the people around them; they would try to express their sentences as short as possible. They would also avoid expressing words that are complex to speak. In view of this, they may prefer the use of gestures to express themselves without using words, or they may allow their peers to finish their sentences for them (Goodwill Report, 2021).

It is observed that students who stutter often develop low self-confidence that has negative consequences on their educational attainment in school. Bullying is equally a major predicament experience by students who are stutters because they tend to have atypical challenges interacting with fellow students, peers and teachers in school. These shortcomings do make them exhibit negative attitude during classroom learning and social activities and these further makes stutters in school to fall behind in learning concepts and skills during their educational learning experience. Thus, when stutters evade speaking or decline to participate in classroom activities, it in turn affects their grades and ability to learn important concepts (Busy Bee Speech. 2022).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Students who are stutters tend to evade the communication of difficult words and opportunities to speak in public, instead they prefer using gestures and short sentences to communicate, to avoid being jested at, bullied or teased. The instance of reading out, making presentations, answering questions in class could be embarrassing and a source of immense anxiety to stutters in school. For these reasons, students who stutter may not contribute appropriately in classroom teaching and learning experience. Generally, teachers should understand the fact that stuttering like any other speech disorder creates anxiety and fear among learners requiring the teachers to assume the position of a counselor providing remedy to the situation

### **Purpose for the Study**

This study empirically investigated the influence of school environment on the learning experience of stutters in inclusive education in Owerri and it specifically determined if:

1. School environment influence the learning experience of students who are stutters in inclusive education setting?
2. Differences exist in the learning experience of male and female students who are stutters in inclusive education setting?

### **Research Questions**

1. Does school environment influence the learning experience of students who are stutters in inclusive education setting?
2. Does difference exist in the learning experience of male and female students who are stutters in inclusive education setting?

### **METHODS**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. 115 identified students who are stutters in inclusive education setting in Owerri Imo state (boys 62 and girls 53) were randomly selected from 10 schools for the study.

Influence of School Environment on the Learning Experience of Stutterers Scale was used to measure the implication of stuttering on students learning experience in Owerri Imo state. It is an eight item self-constructed scale with items such as: I severally repeat words I tend to pronounce and it makes me feel bad; Always I make more than five repetitions of words in a sentence: I always feel frustrated and embarrassed in class when I read, etc.

This instrument was validated using the test-retest method after a two weeks interval and a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained.

#### Procedure

The researchers obtained permission from school authorities of the schools used for the study. Also the researchers sought the consent of the respondents and their teachers. The essence of the study was explained to participants followed

by the administration of the questionnaire on them. Completed questionnaire were retrieved by the research team with non-missing. This exercise lasted for three weeks covering the 10 schools.

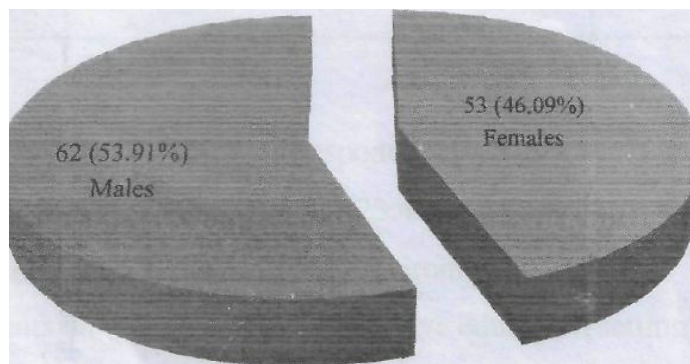
#### Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using student t-test and mean analysis statistical tools at 0.05 level of Significance

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Demographic and Developmental Characteristics of Respondents**

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	62	53.91%
Female	53	46.09%
Total	115	100



**Fig. 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

Table 1 and fig shows that out 115 respondents used for the study, 62 (53.91%) were males and 53 (46.09%) females.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education**

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Education		
JSS 3	18	15.65%
SSS 1	33	28.70%
SSS2	37	32.17%
SSS 3	27	23.48%
Total	115	100

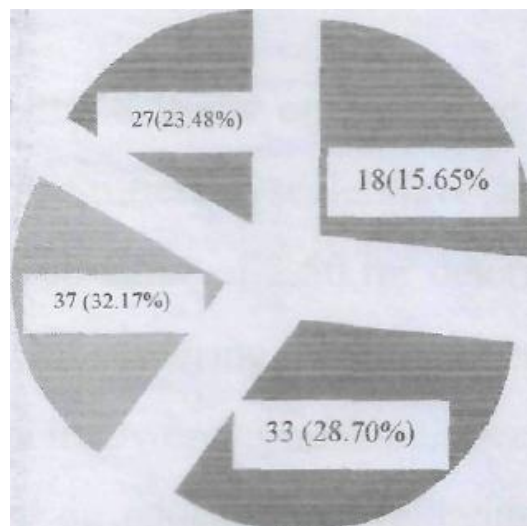


Fig 2: Distribution of Respondents level of Education

- JSS 3
- SSS 1
- SSS 2
- SSS 3

Table 2 and fig 2 shows that among the respondents, 18 (15.65%) are in JSS 3, 33 (28.70%) SSS 1, 37 (32.17%) SSS 2 and 27 (23.48%) SSS3.

**Research Question One:** Does school environment influence the learning experience of students who are stutters in inclusive education setting?

**Table 3: Mean and Rank Order of students who are stutters in inclusive education setting Response to Influence of School Environment on the Learning Experience of Stutterers Scale**

S/N	My Experience During Learning	Mean	Rank
4	I severally repeat words I tend to pronounce and it makes me feel bad	3.38	1 <sup>st</sup>
	I feel sad repeating same sounds during speaking	3.32	2 <sup>nd</sup>
5	always I make more than ten repetitions	3.27	3 <sup>rd</sup>
6	Always I make more than five repetition of words in a sentence	3.16	4 <sup>th</sup>
2	I always feel frustrated and embarrassed in class when I read	3.10	5 <sup>th</sup>
3	I always avoid reading aloud in the classroom	3.01	6 <sup>th</sup>
7	Always an afraid to ask or answer questions in the class	2.86	6 <sup>th</sup>
8	I am always afraid to speak in the classroom	2.83	7 <sup>th</sup>
Composite Mean $\bar{X}(x) / S(N) = 24.93/8$		3.12	

Table 3 shows that all the 8 items on Influence of School Environment on the Learning Experience of Stutterers scale have mean scores that are above the average (benchmark) mean value of 2.50 for determining the high or low extent of the negative influence of stuttering on the learning experience of stutterers in inclusive school settings in Owerri, Imo state.

Overall, the experience of stuttering has impacted negatively on educational wellbeing of students who are stutterers having gotten a grand or composite mean value of 3.12 which is far higher than the benchmark score of 2.50.

**Research Question Two:** Does difference exist in the learning experience of male and female students who are stutters in inclusive education, setting?

**Table 4: t-test analysis on mean score difference in the learning experience of male and female students who are stutters in inclusive education setting**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t	DF	P
Male	62	40.92	11.41	1.96	3.21	113	Sig
Female	53	38.71	9.37				

The result in table 4 reveals that the mean score difference in the learning experience of male and female students who are stutters in inclusive education setting is significant (Crit-t - 1.96, Cal. t = 3.21. df = 113. P < .05 level of significance). The mean and standard deviation revealed that male students are much more affected by stuttering disorder than female students in inclusive educational setting in Owerri.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of research question one revealed that the experience of stuttering impacted negatively on educational learning experience and wellbeing of students who are stutterers having gotten a grand or composite mean value of 3.12 which is far higher than the benchmark score of 2.50. This is consistent with the assertions of Khan (2015) who noted that human environment has considerable impact on the development of stuttering. This is premised on the fact that an environment that is demanding and stressful could cause children to have difficulties in articulating developing fluent speech. Although school learning environment does not cause stuttering, it could negatively influence a student who is deficient in speeches to develop the capacity to be fluent in speech making.

However, stuttering causes strain in speech making and it is consistently characterized by stressful repetition in pronouncing words, syllables, sounds or phrase. For example, "to-to-to-tomorrow". Prolongations are the abnormal lengthening of continuant sounds, for example, "mmmmmmmmilk"; for milk; (i.e., ca-ca-ca-cat), sound prolongations ("sssss-salad," fffffff-fish"), etc. A stutter may express a number of physical reactions, including tension of the muscles involved in speech (tongue, jaw, lips, or chest) and tension in muscles not related to speech (such as shoulders, limbs, and forehead). In addition to these physiological reactions, people who stutter will often have negative emotional reactions to the disorder. Among these emotional reactions are embarrassment, guilt and frustration are more common. Also, Marder (2020) found that students who stutter expresses social discomfort during classroom teaching and learning process and during interaction with peers and significant others in and outside the classroom setting. Stutters inability to competently pronounce words without disruptions make them have compounding challenge. For example Marder stated that a stutter once emailed her teachers before coming to school and intimidated them as thus: "It takes a bit for me to say what I want to say".

She wrote, "so please have some patience with me." This projects the fact that this student could be experiencing nervous in front of her classmates when called out to speak or react and understanding her weakness she sought the patience and support of her teacher. The expectation here is for the teacher to help these student find ways to participate effectively in teaching and learning process in a manner that they find joy in communication.

Likewise, the result of research question two indicates that male students are much more affected by stuttering disorder than female students in inclusive educational setting in Owerri. The reason for this development could be aligned to the fact that naturally, typical school learning environment can be scary for most children as the experience of attending school is a major transitional landmark in their developmental life experience. Often, the teachers, pupils/students and other significant individuals working in the school becomes part and parcel of the pupils/students life. However, for pupils/students who stutters, their school learning experiences could be an amazingly supportive or frustrating experience. When pupils/students stutter, they might be temporarily incapable to express themselves eloquently when speaking. When this happens, stuttering students replicate syllables, words and words gets stuck completely on a word, or both, and often visibly struggles to make an impact. Thus, students who stutter face distinctive learning challenges at school. They may experience social difficulties, with research showing more than half of them are teased or bullied regularly. Also, in school students who stutter are often rated as less popular than their classmates and this circumstantial experience could make them express shy and quiet personality, become anxious and may dodge speaking in class or sit at the back of the classroom to avoid being noticed. These sets of students might be particularly sensitive to evaluation by teachers or peers, and may answer "I do not know" because they are afraid of stuttering (Onslow, 2022).

Thus, the negative effect of stuttering could assume a compounding nature as it impacts on students' developmental wellbeing and their learning competence. Stuttering is a speech disorder that can alter the coherence of expressed speech, sound or ideas communicated by a stutterer because stuttering is often associated with unpleasant repetition of pronounced words, difficulty in articulating sounds, stretching of words while pronouncing them. This experience is always anxiety laden. More than 60 million people stammer and students who stutter are often teased at and the consequences are always the feeling of frustration, dejection, anger, and expressed aggression. Stuttering is classically termed as uncontrolled dysfluency in oral expression. Typically, stuttering is marked as repetition of words, sounds or syllables, or prolonged pauses in between sounds and words during verbal communication between people and this experience can be the expression of negative emotions by the affected person as it impairs their self-concept, personality, identity, self-esteem and academic attainment (Learning Loft, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study has help project the fact that inclusive school learning, environment could have negative impact on stutterers educational learning experience and there is need for concerned stakeholders to be conscious of it.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should carefully pay attention to the learning challenges of students who are stutterers in school, be patient with them and encourage them to develop appropriate coping mechanism that will help them overcome their educational shortcomings.

- Students who are stutterers should endeavour to participate fully in classroom teaching and learning experience and practice their reading repeatedly so as to develop the capacity to master the pronunciations of words, sounds and syllables.
- Teachers should ensure stutterers are not bullied or jested by their peers so as to avoid them feeling frustrated, dejected and discourage to try better in classroom teaching and learning process,

## REFERENCES

- Busy Bee Speech 2022. The affects of stuttering on academic performance: <http://ybiispeech.com/the-affects-of-stuttering-on-academic-performance/> accessed on 12/4/2022
- Goodwill Report, 2021. The Challenges Faced at School by a Kid Who Stutters: <https://www.goodwillcardonation.org/blog/the-challenges-faced-at-school-by-a-kid-who-stutter/> accessed on 12/4/2022
- Khan, N., 2015. The Effect of Stuttering on Speech and Learning process. A Case Study: International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL) 3. (4) 89-103.
- Learning Loft, 2019. Dyslexia and Speech-Related Learning Disorders Statistics: <https://www.learning-loft.com/blogs/learning4oft-blog/dyslexia-speech-related-learning-disorders-statistics> accessed on 16/6/2022
- Marder, J., 2020. The Challenges of Remote Learning for Children Who Stutter: The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/15/well/family/children-speech-stuttering.html> accessed on 12/4/2022
- Onslow, M., 2022. Teased and bullied-the challenges of starting school with a stutter: The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/teased-and-bullied-the-challenges-of-starting-school-with-a-stutter-71699> accessed on 23/7/2022.
- Olayi JE., 2016. Stuttering: A speech disorder, a concern for parents and teachers. Light magazine Vol 8(3) publication of school for the blind obudu, cross river state.