



DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF PRIMARY FIVE PUPIL WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CALABAR METROPOLIS OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study adopted survey design to examine the influence of demographic variables on academic achievement of primary five pupils' with intellectual disability in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. A sample of seven (70) primary 5 pupils' with intellectual disability was selected from public primary schools using simple random sampling technique, teacher nomination check list and school record. One instrument titled "Teacher Nomination Checklist and pupils' academic school records. were used for data collection. The reliability of the questionnaire established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded .87. The hypotheses were tested using Independent t-test for the two hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The result of the findings of the study revealed that gender, age significantly influence academic achievement of pupils' with intellectual disability. It therefore concluded that academic achievement of pupils' with intellectual disability in primary schools depend on their gender differences as well as different in age.. Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it was recommended amongst others that Schools should implement gender-responsive teaching strategies and age-appropriate educational interventions that recognize and address the different learning styles and needs of boys and girls and also targeted support based on developmental stages for pupils with mild intellectual disabilities.

KEYWORDS: Pupils' with intellectual disability, Age, Demographic variables, Gender, Primary schools

INTRODUCTION

Pupils with mild intellectual disabilities (MID) represent a diverse group of learners who require specific educational strategies and supports to thrive academically and socially.

They are typically characterized by significantly below-average intellectual functioning, which affects their academic performance and adaptive behavior. The diagnostic criteria often include an IQ score between 50 and 70, along with challenges in daily living skills and learning

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capabilities. These pupils always experience difficulties in areas such as reasoning, problem-solving, and abstract thinking, but they generally have the potential to learn and develop skills with appropriate support (Ogar, Ibok, Odey, Joseph, Unimuke & Ungie, 2023). According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD, 2015), mild intellectual disability is a condition that results in limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills.

Most of them exhibit limitations in cognitive functioning, which can affect their ability to process information, solve problems, and retain knowledge. According to Miller and Carter (2020), these cognitive challenges can lead to difficulties in understanding complex concepts and following multi-step instructions, ultimately impacting their overall academic performance. Many students with mild intellectual disabilities struggle with social skills, which can impede their ability to interact effectively with peers and teachers. Roberts and Smith (2021) stated that these deficits often result in social isolation and reduced opportunities for collaborative learning, further exacerbating academic difficulties. Johnson and Lee (2018) indicates that these behaviors can disrupt the learning environment, leading to decreased instructional time and increased disciplinary actions, which negatively affect academic outcomes. Pupils with mild intellectual disabilities may exhibit lower levels of motivation and engagement in academic tasks. Wilson and Evans (2022) found that a lack of interest in schoolwork and feelings of frustration can lead to disengagement, making it challenging for these students to achieve their full potential. Some of them do not receive the necessary support to thrive academically. Adams and Green (2019) emphasize that insufficient access to special education resources, individualized instruction, and tailored interventions can hinder their learning experiences and outcomes. Alqurashi et al. (2020) stated that inadequate funding and resource allocation significantly affect the quality of education these pupils receive. The identification of pupils with intellectual disabilities often varies widely among schools, leading to inconsistent support and services. Kauffman et al. (2018) opined that discrepancies in identification practices resulted in some pupils with mild intellectual disability not receiving the necessary

interventions, thereby affecting their academic achievement in schools.

The academic achievement of Primary Five pupils with mild intellectual disabilities in public primary schools is influenced by various demographic variables, yet there is a significant gap in understanding how these factors interact and affect educational outcomes. Despite policies advocating for inclusive education, significant barriers remain which affecting their academic achievement, social integration, and overall well-being. Many pupils with mild intellectual disabilities continue to face barriers that hinder their academic performance (Ibok, Meremikwu, & Umoh, 2020; Ibok & Ntibi, 2021). One major problem is the lack of tailored educational strategies that consider demographic variables such as gender, and age. Adams and Green (2019) stated that educators often overlook the specific needs of pupils with mild intellectual disabilities, which lead to ineffective educational strategies that do not address individual learning differences. Demographic variables refer to the statistical characteristics of a population that can be used to analyze and understand trends, behaviors, and outcomes. They play a vital role in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of pupils with intellectual disabilities in public primary schools. These variables, including age, gender, socio-economic status, and cultural background, which can significantly influence access to resources, the quality of education, and overall student performance. Demographic variables create disparities in academic performance among pupils with mild intellectual disabilities (Ataben, Olofu, & Ifeoma, 2024; Ibok, Ogbebe, Alu, Joseph, Udobong, Collins, 2024).

In public primary schools, addressing the needs of pupils with intellectual disabilities through the lens of demographic variables is vital for fostering inclusive education. By recognizing and analyzing these factors, educators and policymakers can implement targeted interventions that enhance the learning experiences and outcomes for all students (Undielikwo, Ibok & Ubi 2023; Ibok, Ogbebe, Alu, Joseph, Udobong, Collins, 2024). Research study by Smith and Jones (2019) stated that individualized educational plans are more effective when they consider the unique backgrounds of students with disabilities, and understanding the factors essential for developing effective educational strategies tailored to meet

the needs of these students. According to Lee and Martin (2020), demographic variables help identify barriers that may hinder academic success of individual with learning disability. Studies conducted by Thompson and Garcia (2021) found that demographic factors influence academic outcomes which can promote inclusive education practices. Also recognizing the diverse needs of students with mild intellectual disabilities leads to more effective inclusion strategies, fostering a supportive learning environment. As noted by Williams (2021), evidence-based policies that consider demographic can improve resource allocation and support services in public primary schools. As highlighted by Williams and Johnson (2021), understanding the interplay of demographic factors allows for the implementation of best practices that enhance educational achievement and overall well-being. In the context, particularly for pupils with intellectual disabilities, demographic variables such as gender and age are important for identifying needs, tailoring interventions, assessing educational outcomes and improve academic performance.

Gender is a fundamental demographic variable that can influence the identification and support of pupils with intellectual disabilities. Boys are more frequently diagnosed with intellectual disabilities than girls, which may lead to disparities in educational resources and attention (Kauffman et al., 2018; Ibok, Meremikwu, & Umoh, 2020). Gender disparities in the diagnosis and treatment of intellectual disabilities are evident, with boys being diagnosed at higher rates than girls. This discrepancy can lead to unequal access to resources and support services, potentially affecting educational outcomes (Ibok, Meremikwu, Orim Anditung & Inah, 2023). Gender plays a significant role in the academic performance of children with mild intellectual disabilities. A study conducted by Thompson and Miller, (2019) found that girls with ID often perform better academically than their male counterparts, which may be attributed to different socialization experiences and support systems. Furthermore, Johnson and Lee (2020) stated that social dynamics within the classroom can vary significantly by gender, impacting peer relationships and emotional well-being.

Studies have shown that boys and girls with mild intellectual disabilities often exhibit different learning styles and preferences, which can impact

their academic performance. For instance, Garcia and Thompson (2020) found that boys are more likely to engage in hands-on learning activities, while girls tend to excel in verbal tasks. This divergence suggests that gender-sensitive teaching strategies are necessary to accommodate these differences. Research conducted by Roberts and Smith (2021) found that boys with mild intellectual disabilities often face more significant behavioral challenges compared to their female counterparts. These behavioral issues can lead to increased disciplinary actions and reduced instructional time, ultimately affecting academic achievement. In contrast, girls may experience social integration challenges, which can also impact their academic performance but in different ways (Ibok, Meremikwu, Orim Anditung & Inah, 2023). Wilson and Evans (2022) conducted a study on the role of parental involvement in the academic success of children with mild intellectual disabilities and found that parents of boys are often more engaged in behavioral management, while parents of girls focus more on academic support. This difference in parental involvement can lead to varying academic outcomes based on gender. A study conducted by Martin and Lewis (2021) found that girls with mild intellectual disabilities often benefit from stronger social support systems in school, which can enhance their academic performance while boys may not receive the same level of social support, leading to feelings of isolation, decreased motivation and poor performance in schools. Research conducted by Adams and Green (2019) found that teachers may unconsciously hold lower academic expectations for boys with mild intellectual disabilities, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and academic outcomes. Conversely, girls may be encouraged to perform better academically, leading to higher achievement levels. Gender plays a significant role in shaping the academic achievement of Primary Five pupils with mild intellectual disabilities. Understanding these differences is essential for developing effective educational strategies that promote equitable academic outcomes for all students.

Age is another demographic variable that influences the educational needs and outcomes of pupils with intellectual disability. Younger students typically require foundational skill development, while older pupils benefit from training that prepares them for life after school,

including vocational skills and social integration (Smith et al., 2021; Ibok, Thomas & Nyong, 2019). Age-related differences can influence how educational content is delivered and assessed. Garcia and Thompson, (2022) stated that older students with ID may exhibit improved academic performance due to accumulated educational experiences, yet they often still lag behind their typically developing peers. Additionally, behavioral challenges can manifest differently with age, highlighting the need for age-appropriate interventions (Brown et al., 2023). Age-related developmental differences significantly impact academic performance in children with mild intellectual disabilities. Johnson and Lee (2018) found that as students' age, they tend to develop better coping strategies and learning techniques, leading to improved academic outcomes. The younger pupils in this group often struggle with foundational skills, which can hinder their ability to keep pace with older peers. Research conducted by Miller and Carter (2020) found that older pupils generally exhibit higher cognitive functioning, which translates to better academic performance. A study conducted by Smith, Johnson and Clark (2018) found that older pupils with mild intellectual disabilities tend to have better social skills and emotional regulation, contributing to a more positive learning environment. These factors can enhance their engagement and motivation in academic tasks. Wilson and Evans (2022) found that older students are more likely to form supportive peer relationships, which can positively influence their academic performance. In his contrast, younger pupils may experience social isolation, impacting their motivation and achievement. Age differences also affect peer relationships, which are essential for academic success. Research conducted by Adams and Green (2019) found that older pupils who receive more challenging assignments and higher expectations, lead to improved academic outcomes. The empirical evidence proved that age plays a significant role in the academic achievement of Primary Five pupils with mild intellectual disabilities. Understanding these age-related factors is essential for developing effective educational strategies that cater to the diverse needs of students at different developmental stages. The educational experiences and outcomes of pupils with mild intellectual disabilities (MID) in public primary schools are

profoundly influenced by various demographic variables, particularly gender and age.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of demographic variables on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to;

- i) The influence of gender on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools
- ii) The influence of age on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools

Research questions

The following questions guided this study:

- i). How does gender influence academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools?
- ii). How does age influence academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools?

Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

- i) There is no significant influence gender on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools
- ii) There is no significant influence of age on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools

METHODOLOGY

The study area was Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria which consisted of Calabar South and Calabar Municipality Local Government Area. The research design used for this study was the survey design. The researchers used this design in attempt to make inference about the population under study and also allows the assessment of factors under studies at a single point in time. The population of the study is made up of all the primary five pupils with mild intellectual disability in public primary schools in Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. Pupils that made up the population of this study hail from different ethnic groups and socio-economic background. A sample of the 70 pupils with mild intellectual disability in public primary schools in

Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria which consisted of 32 males and 38 females were selected through simple random sampling technique, teacher nomination check list and school record.

The instrument used for data collection was titled "Teacher Nomination Checklist and pupils' academic school records. These instrument were used to identified pupils with mild intellectual disability their gender and age were also classified and used in this study.

For their academic achievement, the average performance scores for first and second terms were computed for all the subjects offered by all the primary five pupils with mild intellectual disability identified and selected for the study were used as their academic achievement. The two kinds of validation established for the instrument of the study were face and content validity. The face and content validity were established by using two (2) experts in special education and two (2) expert in Test, Measurement and Evaluation; both in the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar. The expert

certified that the instrument was face and content valid and could be used for the study. The reliability of the questionnaire established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded .87. The hypotheses formulated to guide the study were appropriately tested using independent- test for the two hypotheses.

Presentation of results

The result of the analysis is presented in Tables 1 and 2. The hypotheses were tested at .05 significant level.

Ho1: There is no significant influence gender on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools

The independent variable in this hypothesis is gender while the dependent variable is academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability . To test this hypothesis, gender were classified into two groups (Male and Female). Based on their classification, their means were computed and compared using the independent t-test analysis. The result is presented in Table 1

TABLE 1: Independent t-test analysis on influence gender on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Gender					
Male	32	57.6563	9.0576	3.037	.003
Female	38	51.8421	6.9458		

*Significant at 0.05, df = 68

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that, there is a significant influence of gender on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools (t=3.037: p=.003) . With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance with 68 degree of freedom. The result also shows that male pupils with intellectual disability with mean score of 57.6563 achieved better in academic work than their female counterpart with mean score of 51.8421

Ho2: There is no significant influence age on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools

The independent variable in this hypothesis is age while the dependent variable is academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability . To test this hypothesis, age were classified into two groups (8 years & below and 9 years & above). Based on their classification, their means were computed and compared using the independent t-test analysis. The result is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Independent t-test analysis on influence age on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Gender					
8yrs & Below	41	56.9756	8.9036	3.094	.003
9yrs & above	29	51.0000	6.37518		

*Significant at 0.05, df = 68

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that, there is a significant influence of gender on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools ($t=3.094$; $p=.003$). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance with 68 degree of freedom. The result also shows that pupils with age 8 years & below with intellectual disability with mean score of 56.9756 achieved better in academic work than their counterpart with age bracket 9 years and above with mean score of 51.000.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the first hypothesis revealed that there is a significant influence gender on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools. This agreed with a study conducted by Thompson and Miller (2019) who found that girls with ID often perform better academically than their male counterparts, which may be attributed to different socialization experiences and support systems. The finding is in line with Johnson and Lee (2020) who stated that social dynamics within the classroom can vary significantly by gender, impacting peer relationships and emotional well-being. The finding is in consonance with Garcia and Thompson (2020) who found that boys are more likely to engage in hands-on learning activities, while girls tend to excel in verbal tasks. The finding is in line with a study conducted by Martin and Lewis (2021) who found that girls with mild intellectual disabilities often benefit from stronger social support systems in school, which can enhance their academic performance.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is a significant influence age on academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools. According to Smith et al., (2021), age-related differences can influence how educational content is delivered and assessed. The finding agreed with Garcia and Thompson, (2022) who stated that older students with ID may exhibit improved academic performance due to accumulated educational experiences. The finding is in line with Brown et al (2023) who found that age-related developmental differences significantly influence academic performance in children with mild intellectual disabilities. Johnson and Lee (2018) found that as students age, they tend to develop better coping strategies and learning techniques, leading to improved academic outcomes. The younger pupils in this group often struggle with foundational skills, which can hinder their ability to keep pace with older peers. The finding agreed with Miller and Carter (2020) who found that older pupils generally exhibit higher cognitive functioning, which translates to better academic performance. The finding is in line with a study conducted by Roberts and Smith (2021) who found that older pupils with mild intellectual disabilities tend to have better social skills and emotional regulation, contributing to a more positive learning environment. These factors can enhance their engagement and motivation in academic tasks. The finding is in consonance with the finding of Wilson and Evans (2022) who found that older students are more likely to form supportive peer relationships, which can positively influence their academic performance.

The finding is in line with Adams and Green (2019) found that older pupils who receive more challenging assignments and higher expectations, lead to improved academic outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The influence of demographic variables, particularly gender and age, on the academic achievement of pupils with mild intellectual disabilities is significant and multifaceted. These factors not only affect the learning experiences of these students but also shape their academic outcomes in primary schools. Gender differences often lead to varied expectations and support mechanisms, while age influences cognitive development and social interactions, both of which are essential for academic success. As pupils progress through their education, older students generally demonstrate better academic performance due to enhanced cognitive abilities and social skills. Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that gender, age individually influence the academic achievement of primary five pupil with intellectual disability in public primary schools

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made;

i) Schools should implement gender-responsive teaching strategies that recognize and address the different learning styles and needs of boys and girls with mild intellectual disabilities. This learning strategies should include differentiated instruction and varied assessment methods.

ii) Schools should implement age-appropriate educational interventions that address the specific needs of pupils with intellectual disabilities. This should includes targeted support based on developmental stages. Younger students may benefit from foundational skills training, while older students could be engaged in more complex tasks that challenge their cognitive abilities.

iii) Professional development programs should focus on equipping teachers with the skills necessary to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by students of different genders and ages. Training should emphasize inclusive practices and effective strategies for fostering social integration.

iv) Schools must adopt consistent and comprehensive identification practices to ensure

that all pupils, regardless of gender or age, receive appropriate support. This includes regular assessments and monitoring of developmental progress.

v) Schools should promote parental involvement by providing resources and training to help parents advocate effectively for their children. This is particularly important for parents of girls with intellectual disabilities, who may face unique challenges.

vi) For older pupils, schools should develop transition plans that prepare students for post-primary education and adult life. This includes vocational training, independent living skills, and social-emotional support.

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