



# TEACHERS' CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND EDUCATION OF PUPILS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN CALABAR MUNICIPALITY OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

This study adopted correlational survey design to established the relationship between teachers' classroom management strategies and education of pupils with mild intellectual disability in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. It was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. A sample of 80 primary four pupils in public primary schools in the study area were selected using simple random sampling technique and teacher nomination check list, school record. One instrument titled "Teachers' classroom management strategies and education of pupils with mild intellectual disability" was developed by the researcher with the help of experts and used for data collection. The reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach Alpha which ranges from .80 to .87. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment correlation Coefficient at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that teachers' classroom communication skills, application of instructional materials, structured learning environment significantly relate with education of pupils with mild intellectual disability in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. It was concluded that the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability depend on effective teachers' classroom communication skills, application of instructional materials, structured learning environment. Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it was recommended amongst others that teachers should improve their competence in classroom communication skills, application of instructional materials through attending conferences, seminars and workshops of stakeholders specifically for the education of pupils with mild intellectual disabilities.

**KEYWORDS:** Classroom management strategies, Education, Mild intellectual disability,

## INTRODUCTION

Mild intellectual disability, previously referred to as mild mental retardation, is characterized by an IQ score typically ranging from 50 to 70.

Individuals with mild intellectual disability may experience challenges in cognitive functioning and adaptive behaviors, which can affect their daily living skills, social interactions, and learning abilities.

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They may have difficulty with problem-solving, abstract thinking, and understanding complex concepts. Most of them struggle with daily living skills such as self-care, communication, and social skills. In order to address this situation, education of pupils with mild intellectual disability is necessary (Ogar, Ibok, Odey, Joseph, Unimuke, & Ungie, 2023)..

**Education of pupils with Intellectual disability** involves the instructional approaches that address the unique learning needs of pupils with Mild intellectual disability (MID). This includes adapting curricula, utilizing specialized teaching methods, and implementing individualized support to enhance learning outcomes. With appropriate support and intervention, individuals with mild intellectual disability can lead fulfilling lives, hold jobs, and participate in their communities. Early intervention and educational programs can significantly improve outcomes for individuals with mild intellectual disability. One of the classroom intervention approach that can be used to improve academic, social and emotional well-being of individual with mild intellectual disability is through teacher classroom management strategies (Ibok, Meremikwu, & Umoh, 2020; Ibok, Ogar, Olofu, Masor, s Etura & Ukoh, 2023).

**Teacher classroom management strategies** refer to the techniques and practices that educators use to create and maintain an effective learning environment. These strategies aim to promote positive behavior, minimize disruptions, and facilitate learning. Effective classroom management is crucial in inclusive settings where pupils with diverse needs, including those with mild intellectual disabilities (MID), are present. These strategies can help prevent behavioral issues before they arise, such as establishing clear rules and routines for effective teaching and learning (Ibok, Ogebebe, Alu, Joseph, Udobong & Collins, 2024). Teacher classroom management strategy is not merely about maintaining order but it is also include ability of the teachers to create an environment conducive to learning. For pupils with MID, effective management strategies can significantly reduce behavioral issues, promote engagement, and improve academic performance ( Masor, Ibok, & Etura, 2023; Nanjwan, Ogar, & Ani, 2020).

A well-managed classroom provides structure and predictability, which are essential for pupils with MID who may struggle with transitions and changes in routine (Akah, Owan, Uduigwomen,

Akpa, 2022; Akpa, Anam, Agina, 2024). Classroom management strategies are essential for creating an effective learning environment, particularly for pupils with mild intellectual disabilities (MID). In spite of the recognition importance of teachers classroom management strategies to pupils with mild intellectual disability, many teachers lack the training and resources necessary to implement them effectively which lead to increased behavioral issues, decrease in academic performance, and a negative classroom climate(Kauffman & Landrum, 2018). The diverse needs of pupils with MID require classroom management strategies that accommodate their unique learning profiles. However, many educators report feeling unprepared to meet these needs, leading to inconsistent application of management techniques (Hwang & Evans, 2018). This inconsistency hinder the educational progress of pupils with mild intellectual disability and exacerbate feelings of frustration among teachers. The problem is compounded by the increasing inclusion of pupils with MID in mainstream classrooms, where teachers often face challenges in balancing the needs of all pupils (Baker et al., 2020; Ibok, Ogebebe, Alu, Joseph, Udobong & Collins, 2024)..

Effective classroom management is essential for fostering a productive learning environment, particularly for pupils with Mild intellectual disabilities (MID). These students often require specialized approaches that accommodate their unique learning needs and behavioral challenges. (Akah, Owan, Uduigwomen, Akpa, 2022; Akpa, Anam, Agina, 2024; Kauffman & Landrum, 2018). Simonsen et al., (2015) stated that inadequate classroom management can lead to negative consequences not only for pupils with MID but also for their peers and the overall classroom climate. Hwang and Evans (2018) found that teachers who lack training in specific management strategies may struggle to create a supportive environment, leading to increased frustration and burnout. Therefore, in this study the teacher classroom management strategies examined which is related with pupils with mild intellectual disability include teacher classroom communication skills, application of instructional materials, structured of learning environment. Teacher classroom communication skills involve the ability of educators to convey information effectively, engage students, and facilitate

discussions. This includes verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, and the ability to adapt communication styles to meet the needs of diverse learners. The use of simple, clear, and concise language when giving instructions help to enhance learner understanding (Nanjwan, Ogar, & Ani, 2020; Undie, Ibok, Okon, & Ani, 2024). According to Brown, and Green, (2021), strong communication skills promote a positive learning environment and encourage student participation. Wilson, and Smith, (2019) stated that effective communication is importance for building rapport and trust between teachers and students.

Effective communication skills not only enhance learning outcomes but also promote a positive relationships between teachers and students. Baker et al., (2020) found that teachers' communication skills significantly influence the educational experiences of students with MID. Effective verbal and non-verbal communication helps in creating an inclusive classroom environment According to Martin et al., (2020). teachers who adapt their communication techniques—such as using simple language, visual aids, and active listening are more successful in engaging pupils with MID. Horner et al., (2019) found that strong communication skills are essential for building trusting relationships between teachers and students with MID. Positive teacher-student interactions contribute to better academic and social outcomes. Jones and Smith, (2021) found that effective communication strategies led to increase teachers' confidence and competence in working with students with MID. Wilson et al., (2022) stated that effective communication extends beyond the classroom. Teachers who communicate effectively with parents and caregivers of students with MID can foster a collaborative approach to education, which is beneficial for learners' development.

The application of instructional materials refers to the strategic use of resources such as textbooks, digital tools, visual aids, and manipulatives in the teaching process. These materials are designed to enhance understanding, engagement, and retention of knowledge among pupils, particularly those with diverse learning needs (Smith & Doe, 2018; Ogar, Ibok & Williams, 2024). According to Johnson, and Lee (2020), effective use of instructional materials can cater to various learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic). Adaptation of materials is essential for

meeting the individual needs of pupils, especially those with intellectual disabilities. Instructional materials play a crucial role in the education of pupils with MID. They provide necessary support and facilitate learning by catering to diverse learning needs. According to **Alqurashi (2019)**, the use of instructional materials enhances engagement and comprehension among students with MID, leading to improved educational outcomes. **Tomlinson (2017)** stated that differentiated approaches, supported by appropriate materials, promote a more inclusive learning environment for pupils with mild intellectual disability. **Smith et al. (2020)** found that visual aids help in better understanding and retention of information, thereby enhancing academic performance. **Jones and Smith (2021)** reported that technology has transformed instructional methods which not only engages students but also provides personalized learning experiences, which are crucial for pupils with MID. **Brown (2018)** noted that insufficient training and resources can hinder the effective implementation of strategies necessary for supporting education of pupils with intellectual disability. **Williams (2022)** found that students who engaged with well-designed instructional materials exhibited higher levels of participation and motivation. The application of instructional materials is vital in the education of pupils with intellectual disabilities. While there are challenges in implementation, effective strategies such as differentiated instruction, visual supports, and technology integration have shown positive outcomes. **Johnson and Lee (2020)** found that the use of tablets and interactive applications not only increased student engagement but also supported personalized learning experiences, allowing pupils to progress at their own pace. **Brown and Green (2021)** stated that teachers who employed differentiated strategies saw notable improvements in student performance and confidence, as materials were aligned with each student's learning profile. A study conducted by Wilson, and Smith, (2019) showed that group activities utilizing structured materials fostered communication skills and peer relationships, which are essential for social development in pupils with MID. **Turner (2022)** found that regular feedback using adapted materials helped students with MID develop a better understanding of their learning and improved their self-efficacy.

A structured environment in education refers to a well-organized and predictable classroom setting that supports learning. This includes clear routines, defined expectations, and a supportive atmosphere where pupils feel safe to express themselves (Turner, 2022). According to **Graham and Harris (2018)**, a structured classroom environment, characterized by clear routines and expectations, helps pupils with MID feel secure and understand what is required of them. A consistent routines can enhance learning outcomes and reduce anxiety for these students

A structured environment helps reduce anxiety among students, particularly those with intellectual disabilities. Johnson and Lee (2020) opined that a consistency in routines and expectations enhances student focus and learning outcomes. A well-structured learning environment is essential for pupils with MID, as it provides predictability and reduces anxiety. **Baker et al. (2016)** opined that a structured environment fosters independence and enhances learning outcomes for students with diverse needs. **Horner et al. (2019)** found that classrooms designed with clear pathways, designated areas for activities, and accessible materials lead to increased student engagement and reduced behavioral issues. **Smith and Jones (2020)** reported that consistent daily schedules with a structured learning environment significantly improve student focus, reduce anxiety, and allowing for better learning experiences.

**Sullivan, and Sadeh (2019)** stated that positive reinforcement and individualized feedback from teachers a structured learning environment enhance the learning experience for pupils with MID, promoting both academic and social skills. **Williams (2022)** found that visual supports with a structured learning environment significantly improve task completion and reduce off-task behavior in students with MID. **Garcia and Smith (2018)** found that small group instruction with conducive learning environment for students' needs and education fosters collaboration and peer learning, and also enhancing educational outcomes. **Martin et al. (2020)** stated that proactive behavior management techniques lead to a more conducive learning atmosphere, which positively influence student engagement.

**Davis (2023)** found that students in well-structured classrooms exhibited higher levels of engagement, improved academic performance, and enhanced social interactions. Structured learning environments positively impact the educational experiences of pupils with MID. The structure of the learning environment plays a critical role in the education of pupils with intellectual disabilities. Effective strategies, including physical arrangement, routine establishment, and supportive interactions, contribute to positive educational outcomes.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between teachers' classroom management strategies and education of pupils with mild intellectual disability in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria

Specifically, the study seeks to established

- i) The relationship between teachers' classroom communication skills and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability
- ii) The relationship between teachers' application of instructional materials and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability
- iii) The relationship between teachers' structured learning environment and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability

#### **Statement of hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- i) There is no significant relationship between teachers' classroom communication skills and the education of pupils' with mild intellectual disability
- ii) There is no significant relationship between teachers' application of instructional materials and the education of pupils' with mild intellectual disability
- iii) There is no significant relationship between teachers' structured learning environment and the education of pupils' with mild intellectual disability

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The study area was Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. The research design used for this study was the correlational survey design. The correlation survey design was used to established the relationship between the variables of study. The population of this study comprised all the primary five pupils with mild intellectual disability 23 public primary schools in Calabar Municipality Local Government Area of

Cross River State. The simple random sampling techniques, teacher nomination check list, school record was used to select a sample size of 80 pupil with mild intellectual disability;. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire titled "Teachers' classroom management strategies and education of pupils with mild intellectual disability". The instrument was developed by the researcher with the help of the two expert in Measurement and Evaluation Department and two experts in Special Education. The questionnaire contained two sections A and B. Section A was designed to elicit information from respondents' demographic variables such as gender while section B consisted of 22 items with four points scale designed to measure the sub-variables of the study. Each item required the respondent to indicate the frequency of his or her various opinions under strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The face and content validity were established by using two experts in Test, Measurement and Evaluation; in the faculty of Education, and two expert in Special Education department both from University of Calabar. The expert certified that the instrument (questionnaire), was face and content validity and could be used for the study. To established the

reliability of the instrument (questionnaire) through Cronbach alpha reliability, a trial testing was done using 20 primary four pupils who were not part of the study in public primary schools were used to examine the internal consistency which give the reliability indices ranges .80 to .87 which indicated that the research instrument was reliable. The hypotheses formulated to guide the study were appropriately tested using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at .05 level of significance for the three hypotheses.

#### Presentation of results

The result of the analysis is presented in Tables 1,2 and 3. The hypotheses were tested at .05 significant level.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' classroom communication skills and the education of pupils' with mild intellectual disability. The independent variable in this hypothesis is teachers' classroom communication skills while the dependent variable is and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability. In testing this hypothesis, mean, standard deviation of teachers' classroom communication skills and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability were computed, compared and correlate using Pearson Product Moment Correction. The results are presented on Table 1.

**Table 1:** Person Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between teachers' classroom communication skills and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability (N= 80)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Teachers' classroom communication skills	80	14.987	2.543	.854	.000
Education of pupils with mild intellectual disability	80	22.765	3.432		

\*Significant at the .05 level, df =78

The result presented on Table 1 shows the high positive significant relationship between teachers' classroom communication skills and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability ( $r=.853$ ;  $p=.000$ ). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. The positive r-value indicated that the more effective teachers' classroom communication skills, the better the education

of pupils with mild intellectual disability tend to be . On the other hand, the more ineffective teachers' classroom communication skills, , the poorer the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability tend to be .

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' classroom application of instructional materials and the education of pupils with mild

intellectual disability. The independent variable in this hypothesis is teachers' classroom application of instructional materials while the dependent variable is and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability. In testing this

hypothesis, mean, standard deviation of teachers' classroom application of instructional materials and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability were computed, compared and correlate using Pearson Product Moment Correction . The results are presented on Table 2.

**Table 2:** Person Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between teachers' classroom application of instructional materials and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability (N= 80)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Teachers' classroom application of instructional materials	80	13.765	2.765	.799	.000
Education of pupils with mild intellectual disability	80	22.765	3.432		

\*Significant at the .05 level, df =78

The result presented on Table 2 shows the high positive significant relationship between teachers' classroom application of instructional materials and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability( $r=.799$ ;  $p=.000$ ). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. The positive r-value indicated that the more effective teachers' classroom application of instructional materials , the better the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability tend to be . On the other hand, the more ineffective teachers' classroom application of instructional materials, the poorer the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability tend to be .

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' structured learning environment and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability. The independent variable in this hypothesis is teachers' structured learning environment while the dependent variable is and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability . In testing this hypothesis, mean, standard deviation of teachers' structured learning environment and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability were computed, compared and correlate using Pearson Product Moment Correction . The results are presented on Table 3.

**Table 3:** Person Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between teachers' structured learning environment and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability (N= 80)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value
Teachers' structured learning environment	80	14.312	2.876	.812	.000
Education of pupils with mild intellectual disability	80	22.765	3.432		

\*Significant at the .05 level, df =78

The result presented on Table 3 shows the high positive significant relationship between teachers' structured learning environment and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability ( $r=.812$ ;  $p=.000$ ). With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. The positive  $r$ -value indicated that the more effective teachers' structured learning environment, the better the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability tend to be. On the other hand, they more ineffective teachers' structured learning environment, the poorer the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability tend to be.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the first hypothesis one revealed that there is a relationship between teachers' classroom communication skills and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability. According to Brown, and Green, (2021), strong communication skills foster a positive learning environment and encourage student participation. The finding agreed with Wilson, and Smith (2019) who stated that effective communication is crucial for building rapport and trust between teachers and students. The finding is in line with Baker et al., (2020) whose finding showed that teachers' communication skills significantly influence the educational experiences of students with MID. Effective verbal and non-verbal communication helps in creating an inclusive classroom environment. The finding agreed with Martin et al. (2020) who stated that teachers who adapt their communication techniques such as using simple language, visual aids, and active listening are more successful in engaging students with MID. This implied that communication strategies lead to improved student comprehension and participation. The finding is in line with Horner et al., (2019) who found that strong communication skills are essential for building trusting relationships between teachers and students with ID. Positive teacher-student interactions contribute to better academic and social outcomes. The finding is in agreement with Jones and Smith, (2021) who found that effective communication strategies led to increase teachers' confidence and competence in working with students with MID.

The result of the second hypothesis one revealed that there is a relationship between teachers' application of instructional materials

and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability/ According to Smith and Doe, (2018), instructional materials are designed to enhance understanding, engagement, and retention of knowledge among students, particularly those with diverse learning needs. The finding agreed with Johnson and Lee (2020) who stated effective use of instructional materials can catered to various learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and adaptation of materials is essential for meeting the individual needs of students, especially those with intellectual disabilities. According to Alqurashi (2019), the use of instructional materials enhances engagement and comprehension among students with MID, leading to improved educational outcomes. Tomlinson (2017) stated that differentiated approaches, supported by appropriate materials, foster a more inclusive learning environment for pupil with mild intellectual disability. The finding is in line with Smith et al. (2020) who found that visual aids help in better understanding and retention of information, thereby enhancing academic performance. The finding agreed with Williams (2022) who found a positive influence of instructional materials on the education of pupils with intellectual disability. The finding is consonance with a study conducted by Wilson et al. (2019) who found that group activities utilizing structured materials promote communication skills and peer relationships, which are essential for social development in pupils with MID. The finding agreed with Turner (2022) who found that regular feedback using adapted materials helped students with MID develop a better understanding of their learning and improved their self-efficacy.

The result of the third hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between teachers' structured learning environment and the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability. According to Turner, (2022), a structured classroom environment, characterized by clear routines and expectations, which helps pupils with MID feel secure and understand what is required of them. The finding agreed with Graham and Harris (2018) who stated that consistent routines with conducive learning environment enhances learning outcomes and reduce anxiety for the students. According to Johnson and Lee (2020), a well-structured learning environment is crucial for pupils with MID,

as it provides predictability and reduces anxiety. The finding is in line with **Baker et al. (2016)** who opined that a structured environment promote independence and enhances learning outcomes for students with diverse needs.

The finding is in line with **Horner et al. (2019)** who found that classrooms designed with clear pathways, designated areas for activities, and accessible materials lead to increased student engagement and reduced behavioral issues. The finding agreed with the finding of **Davis (2023)** who found that students in well-structured classrooms exhibited higher levels of engagement, improved academic performance, and enhanced social interactions. s

### CONCLUSION

Understanding the application of instructional materials, the importance of teacher communication skills, and the necessity of a structured environment is essential for effective learning experiences, particularly for students with diverse needs. Effective communication fosters a supportive atmosphere that enhances student engagement and understanding. A well-structured learning environment provides the necessary framework for these students to thrive, promoting consistency and predictability in their learning experiences. Additionally, the application of instructional materials tailored to meet the specific needs of pupils with intellectual disabilities plays a crucial role in facilitating their learning and development. Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that teachers' classroom communication skills, application of instructional materials, structured learning environment individually significantly relate to the education of pupils with mild intellectual disability in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- i) Teachers should improve their competence of classroom communication skills through attending conferences, seminars and workshops of stakeholders specifically for education of pupils with intellectual disabilities.
- ii) Teachers should be flexible in expressing their classroom management styles to accommodate all set of pupils with intellectual disabilities.

iii) Schools should prioritize the development of structured classrooms that provide clear routines and expectations, helping students feel secure and focused.

iii) Teachers should be encourage to integrate a variety of instructional materials and teaching strategies that cater to different learning styles and abilities, ensuring that all students can access the curriculum effectively.

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