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# JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY AND EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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## **Teachers Knowledge and Awareness of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD) Among Primary School Pupils with Learning Disabilities**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined teachers' knowledge and awareness of attention deficit hyperactivity disorders among pupils with learning disabilities in Ibadan north local government, Oyo State of Nigeria. Three hypotheses were formulated based on the variables. The study adopted an ex-post-facto research method whereby the questionnaire was used to elicit responses from ninety primary school teachers that were selected through systematic sampling technique. The t-test and chi-square statistical methods were utilised in testing the three null hypotheses generated for the study at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that: there was no significant difference between male and female teachers' knowledge and awareness of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. This implies that both male and female teachers used for this study had no knowledge of ADHD. Similarly both young and old teachers had no knowledge of ADHD. There is equally no significant difference between the private and public primary school pupils in their manifestation of ADHD the researchers used for the research.*



## **Introduction**

Behaviour problems are described as those undesirable overt behaviour that individuals may manifest in a wide range of setting in their environments. Such behaviour problems are otherwise referred to as maladaptive or malfunction in the sense that they are socio – unilaterally unacceptable in the specific context in which they are exhibited (Heward, 2003). Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the undesirable behaviours that some children with learning disabilities exhibit. Attention deficit means the inability to attend to a task while hyperactivity means high rate of purposeless movement (Smith, 2007)

Egbochuku and Abikwi (2007) note that every child occasionally has difficulty sitting still or sustaining attention. However, for some children, the problem is so persistent and serious that it interferes with learning and relationships. It is commonly observed that these children have low attention span, which affect their ability to cope in the school.

Attention is regarded as fundamental to human thinking, learning and strategic information processing, and therefore it is significant to a child's development because it assists the child in learning and understanding the object and social world (Miller and Allaris, 1998). Also, it is believed that attention is considered to be an important factor for optimum cognitive development and learning particularly with the presence of competing stimuli. Individuals who are described as having attention problems are those who either demonstrate inappropriate and dissipative motoric activity or have difficulty in the selection and organization of a task and its components.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is one of the most diagnosed disorders of childhood. About half of children referred to outpatient mental health clinics in America had ADHD (Dopheide, 2004). Among children,



this category of behaviour problems is said to reach its peak during the pre- school period as observed by MacFarlane, Allen and Horink (1994).

Authorities such as Barkley (1995), Adewuya and Famunyiwa, (2006) have emphasised that about 25 – 40% of children with learning disability have ADHD. This disorder is believed to have a neurological origin caused by a dysfunction of certain neurotransmitters within the brain. ADHD was once called hyperkinesis or minimal brain dysfunction which affects 3 to 5% of all children and two to three boys than girls (NIMH, 1998 McNeil, 2007). It can continue into adolescence and adult hood and can cause a lifetime frustrated dreams and emotional pain for anybody who has it. ADHD is typically defined as a triad of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. A child with ADHD has poor organization, trouble returning to task, poor sense of time, poor ability to utilize self talk to work through a problem, poor sense of self awareness, get frustrated easily, hyper focused at times, failing to listen to others, talking nonstop, blurting out the first thing on their mind and so on. When a child who has ADHD is not diagnosed early, he suffers in school in the hand of the teachers and peers, and this will contribute to the inability of the child to learn.

Kanu (2004) opines that children are brought to school without teachers prior – knowledge of these children. There are some of them that need special attention from teachers, that due to the teachers ignorance, (that is, lack of know ledge and awareness), such children will be treated the same way as other normal children in the class. This ignorance will make it difficult for teachers to understand the mental state, internal composition, biological, neurological as well as psychological make up of such children and it can lead to their failure both academically and socially.

## **Statement of the Problem**

ADHD has mostly been associated with moderate to severe cases of learning behaviour and emotional disorders and if not early identified and managed can make the child to be miserable in life. Researchers like Forness and Kavale, (2001), NIH, (2000), Jensen, (2000) have gone into the area of the use of medication in the management of ADHD in children. It is discovered that medication alone cannot solve the problem. Also, there are some teachers who do not know or are not even aware of the existence of this problem among the children in their classes. If non drug therapies are to be used to ameliorate the problem of ADHD in children, teachers must be involved. Therefore, this study is meant to identify teachers' knowledge and awareness as well as identifying the characteristics or prevalence of ADHD among the various classes of the primary schools.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify what attention deficit hyperactivity is with specific emphasis on learning disabilities
2. Assess the prevalence of the problems of ADHD among primary school pupils.
3. Assess teachers' knowledge and awareness of the problem of ADHD

## **Hypotheses for the Study**

The following hypotheses were generated for the study at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference between knowledge and awareness of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder of male and female teachers



2. There is no significant difference between knowledge and awareness of young and old teachers about ADHD
3. There is no significant difference between the private and public primary school pupils in their manifestation of ADHD.

## **Methodology**

### **Study Design**

This study adopted an ex-post-facto research design because the study only investigated the existing variables.

### **Population**

The population for the study consist all primary school teachers both in private and public schools in Ibadan North local government area of Oyo Sate.

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A systematic sampling techniques was utilized to select (90) teachers from (7 public and private schools) in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. Out of this number, four public and three private schools were sampled.

### **Research Instrument**

The major instrument used for this study was a set of questionnaire which is adopted and utilized to elicit response from respondents. The instrument is designed to determine the level of awareness for teachers in primary schools of the presences of ADHD among pupils as well as to examine its characteristics (if manifested).

The questionnaire was divided into three sections

Section A: Focused on demographic information

Section B: on teachers' knowledge and awareness of ADHD in pupils in each school.

Section C: is on the characteristics of ADHD.

To validate the instrument, the researchers ensured that the questionnaire correlated with the objective of the study in order to ascertain the content validity of the instrument. Draft copies of the questionnaire were given to the experts in the departments of Special Education and Evaluation for editing.

This is to ascertain the face and content validity of the instrument. Based on their criticism and suggestions on the item on the questionnaire, modifications were made. Suggestions from experts were incorporated into the final draft of the questionnaire in order to enhance the content validity of the instrument.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher visited the schools and distributed the questionnaires to the teachers in the schools used for the research. The data were collected and t-test as well as chi-square statistical analyses were used to collect data for the three hypotheses.

**Results:** The results of this study are shown on tables 1 – 3 in order of the three hypotheses raised to guide the conduct of the study.

**Table 1:** Result of t – test comparison of male and female teachers knowledge of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Variables	N	X	SD	Critical 'T'	Calculated	Df	P	R
Male	24	45.500	12,60435	1.98	.472	88	.638	NS
Female	66	44.00	13.59525					



The first hypothesis states that there will be no significant difference between the knowledge and awareness of attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder of male and female teacher. This result reveals that both male and female teachers have very little knowledge of ADHD but they are not aware of the problem. The t-test statistical analysis for the first hypotheses presented in table 1 above shows that the critical 't' is 1.98, calculated 't' = 472, degree of freedom = 88 while the probability level is 638 which is 7.05 level of significant. This means there is no significant difference; therefore the null hypothesis is accepted

**Table 2** The result of t-test on differences between young and old teachers' knowledge of ADHD

variables	N	x	Std .Deviation	Critical 't'	Calculated 't'	df	P	R
				1.98	.567	88	.572	NS
Young	35	45,4000	15,44859					
Old	55	43,7636	11,81331					

In order to test the second hypothesis that states that there will be no significant difference between knowledge and awareness of ADHD of young and old teachers, the data collected were computed to get the mean and standard deviation values of the variables compared. The calculated 't' was 0.57 and the 't' critical (observed was 1.98. Since the 't' calculated was less than the 't' critical, the null hypothesis was accepted. In other words, there is no significant difference in the knowledge and awareness of ADHD of young and old teachers.

**Table 3.1:** Result of chi-square table analyses for prevalence of ADHD in public and private primary schools.

Teachers' knowledge, awareness of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

- Are you aware of pupils with ADHD in your class? Yes  No
- How many of them are in your class? None  >5  6-10   
above 10

School type cross tabulation

How Many Of Them Are In Your Class	Public School	Private school	Total
None count	32 84.2%	6 15.8%	38 100%
<5 count	36 78.3%	10 21.7%	46 100%
6-10 count	2 66.7%	1 33.3%	3 100%
10+ count	2 100%	1 33.3%	3 100%
TOTAL	73 81.1%	17 18.9%	90 100%

Table 3.2 Chi-square

	Value	X <sup>2</sup> Tab	Df	Asymp.(sig 2 side)
Pearson chi-square	1.5899	7.8	3	.662

In order to test the third hypothesis that states that there is no prevalence of ADHD among pupils in public and private primary schools, the data shown in table 3.2 above, explained that the X2 critical/tabulated = 7.81, X2 calculated/observed = 1.589, since X2 tabulated > X2 calculated at 0.05 level of significance, there is no significant difference between the private and public primary school pupils in their manifestation of ADHD. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

**Discussion**

The first hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between knowledge and awareness of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder of male and female teachers. The result of the study shows that the null hypothesis was accepted. The result reveals that both the male and female teachers of the schools used by the researchers have no knowledge and awareness of ADHD. This findings agree with Wolraich, (1999) who found out that ADHD is well known but little understood. Furthermore, it implies that the sex of participants does not contribute to their knowledge of ADHD.



The second hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the knowledge and awareness of young and old teachers about ADHD. The result of the study reveals that the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that both old and young teachers have no knowledge of ADHD and that the understanding of ADHD has no connection with teachers' length of service in the profession. Further, participants' responses indicate that they are ignorant of the existence of the learning or behavioural disorders called ADHD. The finding is somewhat intriguing because it appears that the newly employed teachers do not actually possess the traits required for professional success in this modern age.

One would have thought that the new teachers, who have been exposed to varied methods of teaching during their training, should not display outright ignorance concerning the presence of ADHD among their pupils. Perhaps, some of them did not acquire the vital skills during their teacher training period. Therefore, further re-training becomes necessary if these teachers would teach pupils effectively. They lack mastery of basic educational principles and strategies. Some of them are conservative because it is possible that they do not want to accept the reality of life that some individuals do encounter mild to severe disorders such as learning disabilities or ADHD. It is also possible that both groups that is, newly employed teachers and teachers who have been in the service for a long time share same religious ideas. Nowadays, certain religious beliefs lure people into rejecting the existence of "the reality".

The third hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between the private and public primary school pupils in their characteristics manifestation of ADHD. The result of the study shows that the null hypothesis is accepted. This shows that actually pupils taught by the teachers who participated in this study do display characteristics of ADHD although as stated earlier, their teachers do not seem to be aware of this disorders. According to this findings, the idea of private or public

school system as operated in Ibadan North LGA has no impact on the level or type of ADHD the pupils encounter.

Pupils between the ages of 5 and 12, though they attend private or public school do experience different levels of ADHD. It was revealed that some of these pupils lack organization skills, have troubles returning to task, exhibit poor sense of time, get frustrated easily, talking nonstop and are hyper focused. As a result of their teachers' lack of knowledge about ADHD, pupils from private as well as public primary schools are faced with numerous problems both in and outside their classroom.

In the same vein, this finding supports the assertion of the American Psychiatric Association (2000) that ADHD occurs in between 3 to 5 percent of all school age children. Therefore, irrespective of whether a child attends a private school (where he receives lessons in more conducive environment) than his or her counterparts in the public schools. School age pupils are vulnerable to similar behavioural disorders such as ADHD. This finding likewise corroborates Heward (2003) observation that a typical classroom will have one or two pupils either diagnosed as ADHD or presenting the problems typically associated with ADHD.

### **Recommendations**

Based on this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Education policy makers should organize numerous public enlightenment campaigns on awareness, identification and remediation of ADHD which will serve as an informative platform to all and sundry.
2. Primary school teachers are to be trained by special educators or people who are more knowledgeable about the ADHD so as to be able to identify children with ADHD. This training will be useful to enable them not to see children with ADHD as wicked, destructive or someone who cannot make it in life.



3. Parents are to be given tutorials on their hyperactive children, especially on how to manage the children's excess behavior.
4. Children with ADHD can make it, if there are early intervention programmes for them, therefore the government could intensify efforts by way of involving professionals in the field in the management of the children with ADHD

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