



Volume 7 July, 2019.

ISSN 30964 Available Online

# JOURNAL OF KINETICS AND HEALTH EDUCATION PERSPECTIVES (JKHEP)

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**JOURNAL OF KINETICS AND  
HEALTH EDUCATION  
PERSPECTIVES**  
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**JOURNAL OF KINETICS AND HEALTH EDUCATION  
PERSPECTIVES  
(JOKHEP)**

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Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt.

Published by  
Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education,  
Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt.

**VOL. 7, No.2, SEPTEMBER, 2019.**

ISSN: 30964

Printed by  
**UZOPIETRO PUBLISHING COMPANY**  
#27 Onumonu Street Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.  
#1 Golden Valley Woji Estate, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.  
#170 Nawfia Street, AguAwka, IfiteAnambara State, Nigeria.

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## **PARENTS AND TEACHERS' CHARACTERISTICS AS PREDICTORS OF READING SELF-EFFICACY OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN IBADAN OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

**Kelechi, Uchemadu Lazarus (PhD) and Oluwaseun, Oluwaseyi Tomoloye**  
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### **Abstract**

The study investigated the predictions of teachers' characteristics and parents' characteristics to reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities in junior secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State. The study adopted a descriptive research design. A sample of one hundred (100) students with learning disabilities was purposively selected from four (4) sampled junior secondary schools. Three validated research instruments titled: Screening Checklist for Suspected Learning Disabilities ( $r=0.72$ ), Teacher and Parent Factors Questionnaire ( $r= 0.73$ ) and Students' Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire ( $r= 0.85$ ) were used for data collection. The data collected were subjected to analysis with the use of Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regressions. Results revealed that parents' verbal support and encouragement of their children ( $r = 0.265$ ,  $p(0.161)<0.05$ ) and parents' socio-economic status ( $r=.239$ ,  $p(0.016)<0.05$ ) have significant positive relationship with reading self-efficacy of the participants while teachers' use of reinforcement and teachers' level of education have no relationship with reading self-efficacy of the participants. The independent variables combined together accounted for 12.4% of the variance in the prediction of the reading self-efficacy of the participants. The analysis of variance for the regression yielded an F-ratio of 3.361 significant at 0.05 level. Results obtained also showed that parents' verbal support and encouragement of their children ( $\beta = 0.256$ ) and parents' socio-economic status ( $\beta = 0.216$ ) have positive contributions to reading self-efficacy of participants while teachers' use of reinforcement and teachers' level of education did not account for variability in the dependent variable. It is therefore recommended that school administrators and teachers should ensure that they educate parents of students with learning disabilities on the need to provide adequate verbal support and encouragement to their wards in order to improve the students' reading self-efficacy.

**Key words:** learning disabilities, reading self-efficacy, reinforcement, level of education, Verbal support and encouragement, socio-economic status,

### **Introduction**

The ability to engage in proficient reading is essential to all learners including students with learning disabilities. This is because it helps learners to communicate well, access school subjects, enter smoothly into a vocation or chosen profession and obtain success in academic pursuits and life endeavours. In order to acquire reading proficiency readers exercise huge



amount of perseverance during the complex processes of decoding, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Hence, reading involves being resolute, decisive and possessing the belief that one can read successfully. No matter the challenges faced during reading task, a good reader usually remains focused and on task without yielding to frustration and fear of failure in reading assignments. Sometimes, a reader may be presented with a lengthy text or a text with somewhat difficult themes and vocabulary. Going through such texts could be discouraging without deep seated personal drive and conviction and proper mastery of the reading skills. Thus, reading can be described as a complex process that involves utilizing a variety of well co-ordinated skills and abilities as well as continuous practice, development, refinement, creativity, critical analysis and determination.

Learners (those with learning disabilities inclusive), thus need to be efficacious in the reading tasks in order to cope with academic work and out of school demands later in life. Many students with learning disabilities have major difficulties learning to reading and performing reading tasks and assignments. Students with learning disabilities are a group of students who manifest significant discrepancies between their potential and their actual academic achievement in virtually all core school subjects although the students possess adequate intelligence. Bender (2001) explained that reading difficulties are common among students with learning disabilities more than any other problem area of academic performance. It is the most prevalent type of academic difficulty for students with learning disabilities. It is estimated that as many as 90% of students with learning disabilities have reading difficulties, and even the low estimates are approximately 60%. According to Irvin, Meltzer and Dukes(2007) students with learning disabilities often become frustrated because they see themselves as being incompetent in many areas of school, thus generally making them unmotivated and unexcited to read, write, and complete tasks for fear of failure, embarrassment, and disrespect. It should be noted that as competence in a subject or task improves, however, motivation typically increases, generating a cycle of engagement, motivation, and competence that supports better academic achievement for students with varying abilities.

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's convictions to successfully execute a course of action required to obtain a desired outcome or goal (Bandura, 1997). When people believe that they are capable of bringing about changes in their lives they become more motivated to achieve their goals. Pajares (1996) submitted that self-efficacy can be described as a persons' confidence to perform a specific task successfully and is linked closely to initial task engagement, persistence, and achievement. Self-efficacy has been considered as an important factor that could influence the types of goals people set be it in academic, behavioural, or social settings. Within the academic context, Schiefele, Schaffner, Moller and Wigfield (2012) described reading self-efficacy as the degree of a student's expectation about his own achievement of a reading task. Thus, students who are confident in their reading skills expect high marks in examinations. The opposite is true of those who lack confidence. This could be the reason why students who lack confidence in their reading skills envision a low grade even before they begin an examination or



enroll in a reading task. For instance, if a student with learning disabilities believe that he is not a good reader due to his past performance in reading; this can lead the student to become disengaged in reading activities and reduce his opportunities to master reading skills.

Students with learning disabilities often have lower self-efficacy beliefs in comparison with their peers without learning disabilities (Klassen, 2010; May & Stone, 2010; Reed, Kennett, Lewis & Lund-Lucas, 2011). This accounts for the general poor academic achievement which is widespread among students with learning disabilities. Some researchers have also found that a positive relationship exists between academic self-efficacy beliefs and equivalent academic progress (Klassen, 2010) and school completion (Gerber, 2012). Therefore, this present study is significant in that it is interested in ascertaining the relationships between selected parents and teachers' factors in relation to reading self-efficacy among students with learning disabilities. The big picture is that it is necessary to understand the issues that surround the nature of students with learning disabilities and the factors that make or mar their school progress of which low reading self-efficacy is one of such factors.

Self-efficacy has been perceived to emanate from several sources especially, past experiences and performances at family, school and peers. Bandura (1997) identified four factors that contribute to an individual self-efficacy as follows: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective indexes. Two teacher related factors considered in this study are teachers' use of reinforcement and teachers' level of education. According to Afe (2002, cited in Essays, UK, November, 2013) a teacher in the educational process refers to the person who instructs to provide the teaching-learning process. Teachers can influence how students build general or subject-specific self-efficacy like reading self-efficacy. The feedback that teachers give to students and the manner in which such feedback is presented could serve as a very important source of self-efficacy. Teachers who reinforce students do so through a variety of means. Ormrod (2006) explained that a teacher can use a concrete reinforcer in which case he gives the student something that can be touched for example, a snack, a sticker or a toy for certain behaviour like when a student with learning disabilities engages in shared reading willingly. It can be just compliments (praise, smile) nods of approval and expressions of appreciation or even an opportunity to engage in a favourite activity. A student's self-efficacy can be raised when he receives positive feedbacks and comments from his teacher, parent and peer about his ability to successfully complete the task (Schunk, 2003, Lunenburg, 2011). Such positive feedbacks must be timely and frequent in order to raise the self-efficacy of the student. For instance, the teacher can say "you are working very hard on that" rather than simply saying "good" (Schunk, 2003).

Studies for instance, Ozmen (2011) demonstrated that there is a link between teacher's verbal immediacy behaviours such as verbal praise of comments made by students in the classroom and addressing students by their first names, and students' affective and cognitive learning. Henderlong and Lepper (2002) reported that praise is a kind of verbal reinforcement that may serve to undermine, enhance or have no effect on children's intrinsic motivation,



depending on a set of conceptual variables. The researchers however maintained that sincere praise helps to motivate learners as it encourages performance attributions to controllable causes, promotes autonomy, enhances competence without overreliance on social comparisons and conveys attainable standards and expectations. Byrd (2017) found that modelling, student choice, use of high interest materials and encouragement were identified by literacy teachers of students in grades three through eight as best practices for reading self-efficacy. Also, the study findings revealed that practices which have negative impact on a student's reading self-efficacy included the use of negative feedback, negative teacher attitude, lack of modelling, uninteresting materials and materials not matched to the student's academic level.

Teacher characteristic, in terms of teachers' level of education could also influence student reading self-efficacy as well as achievement directly or indirectly. While Goldhaber and Brewer (1996) found that the years of parental education is significant and positively related to test scores of students in four subjects (mathematics, English, science and history) another finding of their study revealed that the percentage of teachers with at least a Master of Art degree is statistically insignificant in improving student achievement in all four subjects considered. This report thus led to the submission that teachers' qualification is not a strong factor in respect to students' achievement. When achievement is enhanced, reading self-efficacy which has been found to predict student achievement will also improve. Hanushek's (1989) examined 113 studies on the relationship between teacher level of education and student achievement and found that only eight studies representing seven per cent of the studies showed statistically significant positive results. Goldhaber (2002) found that an estimate of 3 per cent of the contribution teachers made to student learning was associated with teaching experience, degree attained and other readily observable characteristics. The remaining 97 per cent of their contribution was associated with qualities or behaviours that could not be isolated and identified.

In addition, Wayne and Young (2003) reported dearth of empirical results in English and history, to draw final conclusions on the relationship between teacher education level and student achievement. Zhang (2008) obtained a significant interaction between teachers with advanced degree in science or education and years of teaching science, which was inversely associated to student achievement. An analysis of the National Centre for Education Statistics' (NCES) Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K) by Riordan (2009), revealed that students who were taught by certified teachers during the primary school years performed better in mathematics and reading than those taught by uncertified teachers. The effects were greater in reading than in mathematics. Feng and Sass (2013) reported that students with disabilities taught by teachers certified in special education obtained greater achievement in both mathematics and reading than their counterparts taught by teachers that are uncertified in special education. However, students without disabilities experience slightly lower achievement when taught by a special education certified teacher.

The contributions of parents' verbal support and encouragement of their children to the reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities was explored in this study. Bandura



(1977, 1997) reiterated that verbal persuasion is effective in convincing others that they do in fact have the ability to succeed, which in turn, enhance self-perceptions of efficacy. Bandura (1997) posited that positive encouragement together with specific feedback which provides verbal evidence supporting a person's capacity to master a given task enable a person to undertake higher levels of effort required to succeed. It then means that if a student for instance has a challenging reading task to read, and receives support from educators and peers, he will be encouraged to initiate effort and persist until he is successful at the task. It is therefore, possible for a student with learning disabilities to receive encouragement from his parents and teachers that can raise or lower their reading confidence.

Meece and Soderman (2010) traced the impact of positive verbal environment on the social development of young children. According to Meece and Soderman (2010) adults can help children build positive self-perceptions about themselves and others by ensuring that there is a positive verbal environment at home and in the school. Positive verbal environment thus entails the use of words to celebrate rather than minimize children's efforts and accomplishments. It therefore implies that parents who provide verbal supports and encouragement to their children will foster social development in the children, raise self-efficacy and help their children to build motivation in reading which will indirectly lead to better academic achievement.

In a study by Joet, Usher and Bressoux (2011) it was revealed a positive relationship between verbal encouragement and mathematics and French in elementary school students while a positive relationship was found between verbal encouragement and science self-efficacy in middle school students (Kiran & Sungur, 2012), after controlling for other sources of self-efficacy. Beets, Cardinal and Alderman, (2010) reviewed 66 empirical studies on parental social support for their children's participation in healthy physical activities and found that encouragement was the most widely studied type of parental support (31 studies). Most of the studies revealed that parental encouragement was positively related to children's healthy physical activity outcomes, leading the authors to conclude that encouragement may be one of the most influential types of parental support.

Another study by Mapp (2003) involved an interview of eighteen parent son several social and school factors that influence why and how the parents get involved in their children's education. The parents explained that they encourage their children to do well in school by talking to them regularly about the importance of receiving a good education. The parents reported that they asked the children how things went in school each day and praised them for good academic performance. Parents get to hear about school matters from the children's perspectives and be able to compare such with the teachers' views. Parents explained that verbal support and encouragement afforded them the opportunity to show the children that parents are serious about the importance of schooling, and led to completion of children's homework. All the parents provided firm directives to their children to do their homework; they also set specific time schedules for homework completion. The parents gave verbal supports (for instance, they would say "Do your homework. Do your homework". "You have to do it now because this is



your education”) and coaxed the children not to “give up” and to complete the work and provide space for children to complete their homework. In the parents’ opinion, all these are supports that are aimed at increasing the self-efficacy of the children and indirectly lead to better academic achievement.

Parents’ socio-economic status is another parental factor considered in this study. Socio-economic status (SES) is often measured as a combination of income, education and occupation of an individual or a family. It is typically categorized into high, middle and low. It represents an individual’s class, or position within a hierarchical social structure in which case is capable of influencing various processes in the life of an individual. Aikens and Barbarin (2008) found that students from low-SES environments acquire language skills more slowly, exhibit delayed letter recognition and phonological awareness, and are at risk for reading difficulties. Palardy (2008) revealed that students from low-SES schools entered high school 3.3 grade levels behind students from higher SES schools. In addition, students from the low-SES groups learned less over 4 years than children from higher SES groups, graduating 4.3 grade levels behind those of higher SES groups. Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeir and Macziuga (2009) found that children from low socio-economic status households and communities develop academic skills slowly compared to children from higher socio-economic groups.

From the foregoing, it should be noted that although reading self-efficacy was described as the strongest predictor of academic achievement (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), there are limited studies on reading self-efficacy among those identified with learning disabilities and especially within the locale of this study, which is Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Also, studies showing the relationship between the independent variables (teachers’ use of reinforcement, teachers’ level of education, parents’ verbal support and encouragement of their children, parents’ socio-economic status) and reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities are also scarce. This present study was undertaken to fill this gap.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions were raised and answered in this study as follows:

1. What is the relationship between the independent variables (teachers’ use of reinforcement, teachers’ level of education, parents’ verbal support and encouragement of their children and parents’ socio-economic status) and the dependent variable (reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities)?
2. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (teachers’ use of reinforcement, teachers’ level of education, parents’ verbal support and encouragement of their children and parents’ socio-economic status) to the dependent variable (reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities)?
3. What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (teachers’ use of reinforcement, teachers’ level of education, parents’ verbal support and encouragement of



their children and parents' socio-economic status) to the dependent variable (reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities)?

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive research design of the correlational type. The participants of this study were one hundred (100) students with learning disabilities from four (4) secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. The participants included every Junior Secondary School Class 3 (JSS 3) students with learning disabilities who were identified as having learning disabilities after ensuring that the students were properly screened for the presence of learning disabilities. The participants were male (56) and female (44) students, within the age of 10 and 16 years. The schools were chosen randomly across the local government. The study made use of simple random sampling technique to select the schools and purposive sampling to select the participants in the school. The following instruments were used for data collection: (i) Screening Checklist for Suspected Learning Disabilities, (ii) Teacher and Parent Factors Questionnaire (TPFQ) and (iii) Students' Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SRSQ).

**Screening Checklist for Suspected Learning Disabilities:** The screening checklist for learning disabilities developed by Carol Herriot (2004) at University of Guelph, Ontario was adapted for the study. The purpose of this instrument was to identify students with suspected learning disabilities. It is a 15-point questionnaire which has a 5 point scale with scoring ranging from "never", "almost never", "sometimes", "often", "all the time". A trial-test was carried out involving thirty (30) students with learning disabilities who were not part of the sample. The data was analysed and the Cronbach alpha obtained was 0.72.

**Teacher and Parents Factors Questionnaire (TPFQ):** The scale has two sections, the first section focused on personal data of the participants (such as parents' residence, educational, occupational and social status, and teachers' level of education). The researchers carefully selected items that would yield responses that are related to the purpose of this study. The second section of the questionnaire has thirty (30) items that elicited responses on whether: teachers apply reinforcement for students with learning disabilities during reading lessons (for example, whenever I perform well in my reading task, "my teacher praises me verbally", "my teacher writes appreciative comments in my note book"). Examples of questions on parents' verbal support and encouragement to their children are: "my parents give verbal compliments when I complete my reading task", "my parents promptly answer questions I raise regarding my reading assignment"). Some questions on the Parents Socio-Economic Status Scale (SES) developed by Salami (2000) were adapted for this questionnaire. A trial-test was conducted for the TPFQ on thirty (30) students with learning disabilities who were not part of the sample. Responses were used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.79 using Cronbach alpha statistics.

**Students' Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SRSQ):** In designing this questionnaire, care was taken to select items that would yield responses that are related to the reading self-



efficacy of students with learning disabilities. For instance, some questions asked were “I can always manage to answer difficult reading questions if I try hard enough”. “It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals in reading”. The questionnaire had ten (10) items. The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to the responses by ticking only one column out of the four columns provided for each question. The key is represented as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). A trial-test was conducted and responses subjected to statistical analysis using Cronbach alpha and a reliability coefficient of .0.85 was obtained. The researchers personally administered all the research instruments by themselves. None of the questionnaires was lost.

### Data Analysis

Pearson Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the research questions at 0.05 level of significance. PPMC was used to find the relationship between the variables while multiple regression analysis was computed to ascertain joint and relative contributions of the independent variables to the dependent variable.

### Results

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):** What is the relationship between the independent variables (teachers’ use of reinforcement, teachers’ level of education, parents’ verbal support and encouragement of their children and parents’ socio-economic status) to the dependent variable (reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities)?

**Table 1:** Zero-order Correlation showing the significant relationships between Reading Self-efficacy of the participants, teachers’ use of reinforcement, teachers’ level of education, parents’ verbal support and encouragement of their children and parents’ socio-economic status

	Reading self-efficacy	Teachers’ use of reinforce.	Teachers’ level of educ.	Parents’ verb. Support & encourag.	Parents’ socio-econ. Status	Mean	S.D
Reading self-efficacy	1					26.15	8.00
Teachers’ use of reinforce.	0.141 0.161	1				28.44	6.22
Teachers’ level of education	0.002 0.997	0.248* 0.013	1			312.59	3.35
Parents’ verb. support & enc.	0.265** 0.008	0.219* 0.029	0.187 0.063	1		35.13	4.55
Parents’ socio-econ. Status	0.239* 0.016	.337** .001	0.087 0.388	0.077 0.447	1	139.59	6.71

The results in table 1, show that there is no relationship between teachers’ use of reinforcement ( $r=0.141$ ,  $p(0.161) >0.05$ ) and reading self-efficacy of the participants. There is no significant relationship between teachers’ level of education ( $r=0.002$ ,  $p(0.997) >0.05$ ) and



reading self-efficacy of the participants. Conversely, there is a significant relationship between parents' use of verbal support and encouragement ( $r=0.265$ ,  $p(0.161) < 0.05$ ) and reading self-efficacy. There is a significant relationship between parents' socio-economic status ( $r=0.239$ ,  $p(0.016) < 0.05$ ) and reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities. This implies that parental factors are important in building reading self-efficacy among students with learning disabilities.

RQ 2: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (teachers' use of reinforcement, teachers' level of education, parents' verbal support and encouragement of their children and parents' socio-economic status) to the dependent variable (reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities)?

**Table 2:** The joint contribution of the independent variables (teachers' use of reinforcement, teachers' level of education, parents' verbal support and encouragement of their children and parents' socio-economic status) to the reading self-efficacy of the participants

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate			
.352	.124	.087	7.6466			
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	786.015	4	196.504	3.361	.013	Sig.
Residual	5554.735	95	58.471			
Total	6340.750	99				

Table 2 shows that the joint contribution of the independent variables (teachers' use of reinforcement, teachers' level of education, parents' verbal support and encouragement and parents' socio-economic status) to the prediction of reading self-efficacy of the participants was significant. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation (multiple  $R = 0.352$  and a multiple  $R^2$  of 0.124. This means that 12.4% of the variance was accounted for by the predictor variables when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at  $P < 0.05$ . The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded an F-ratio of 3.361 (significant at 0.05 level): This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

RQ 3: What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (teachers' use of reinforcement, teachers' level of education, parents' verbal support and encouragement of their children and parents' socio-economic status) to the dependent variable (reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities)?



**Table 3:** Relative contribution of the independent variables (teachers’ use of reinforcement, teachers’ level of education, parents’ verbal support and encouragement of their children and parents’ socio-economic status) to the reading self-efficacy of the participants

Model	Unstandard. coefficient		Stand. coefficient	T	Sig.	Remark
	B	Std. Error	Beta Cont.			
(Constant)	4.793	9.536		0.503	0.616	n.s.
Teachers’ use of reinforce.	3.969E-02	0.137	0.031	0.290	0.773	n.s.
Teachers’ level of education	-0.177	0.239	-0.074	-0.742	0.460	n.s.
Parents’ verbal Support & encoug.	0.450	0.175	0.256	2.575	0.012	sig
Parents’ socio-econ. Status	0.258	0.122	0.216	2.117	0.037	sig.

Table 3 reveals the relative contribution of the three independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights, viz: between teachers’ use of reinforcement and reading self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.031$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), no significant relationship existed. Further, there was no significant relationship between teachers’ level of education ( $\beta = -0.074$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) and reading self-efficacy of participants. However, there was a significant relationship between parents’ verbal support and encouragement ( $\beta = 0.256$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and reading self-efficacy while the finding show that a significant relationship existed between parents’ socio-economic status ( $\beta = 0.216$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and reading self-efficacy of participants.

### Discussion of the findings

The finding in this study has revealed that there is a significant relationship between parents’ verbal support and encouragement and reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities. When students with learning disabilities receive parental support and encouragement assuring them that they can excel or master a task, they are more likely to complete the task. In this study, the task is reading. The finding corroborates the position of Meece and Soderman (2010) that when parents provide verbal supports and encouragement to their children the social development in the children is enhanced, self-efficacy is raised and children’s motivation in reading is improved. The finding is in line with the finding of Beets, Cardinal and Alderman (2010) which demonstrated that parental encouragement was positively related to children’s healthy physical activity outcomes and such encouragement may be one of the most influential types of parental support. The present finding supports the finding of Mapp (2003) that showed



that parents verbal support and encouragement yield numerous benefits, one of which is the fact that it leads to completion of homework by students, then to increase in the self-efficacy of the students and indirectly lead to better academic achievement. The finding corroborates the finding of Byrd (2017) that encouragement was identified by literacy teachers of students in grades three through eight as one of the best practices for reading self-efficacy.

Furthermore, the finding of this study has shown that there exists a reasonable level of influence of parents' socio-economic status (SES) on students' reading self-efficacy. This finding is in consonance with the study of Aikens and Barbarin (2008) that reported that students from low-SES environments are at a disadvantage in respect to acquisition of language and reading skills. Also, this finding agrees with Palardy's (2008) finding that students from low-SES schools entered high school 3.3 grade levels behind students from higher SES schools. Thus, it is confirmed that socio-economic status of parents influences the reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities. This can be as a result of the students lagging behind their mates in attaining higher academic levels. Without proficiency in reading skills (perhaps achieved through high reading self-efficacy level), it will be difficult for students to make progress in school.

The finding of this study shows that there is no significant relationship between teachers' characteristics such as teachers' use of reinforcement and their level of education and reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities. This finding contradicts the finding of Ozmen (2011) that revealed a link between teacher's verbal immediacy behaviours such as verbal praise of comments made by students in the classroom and students' affective and cognitive learning. The finding however, agrees with the submission of Henderlong and Lepper (2002) which revealed that praise is a kind of verbal reinforcement that may serve to undermine, enhance or have no effect on children's intrinsic motivation, depending on a set of conceptual variables. Teachers, who use reinforcement effectively, (be it praise, token, toys, free time on the computer, sticker, and others), adhere to the guiding principles of reinforcement for positive outcomes. Schunk (2003) explained that feedbacks must be positive, timely and frequent in order to raise the self-efficacy of the student. Negative feedbacks by teachers do not build reading self-efficacy; instead negative feedbacks lower it (Byrd, 2017).

The present finding showing no significant relationship between teachers' level of education and reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities is in line with Goldhaber and Brewer (1996) finding that teachers' qualification is not a strong factor in respect to students' achievement. The finding of this study does not agree with the finding of Riordan (2009) which revealed that students who were taught by certified teachers during the primary school years performed better in mathematics and reading than those taught by uncertified teachers. It should be noted that whatever is capable of enhancing student achievement could also improve reading self-efficacy because both are closely related. Despite this present finding, it may be true therefore to suggest that a student's level of personal accomplishment may have a greater impact on the stability of her/his reading self-efficacy than does verbal persuasion



especially if given by the teacher. In addition, notwithstanding the level of education of teachers of students with learning disabilities, it could be argued that a teacher's commitment, teaching strategies, communication ability, patience and passion towards teaching students with learning disabilities are cogent factors in ensuring whether a teacher can raise the reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities or not. Hence, no significant relationship was obtained in this study between the level of education of teachers and reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities.

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that parents' characteristics in terms of verbal support and encouragement and parents' socio-economic status are more potent predictors of the reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities than teachers' characteristics such as teachers' use of reinforcement and teachers' level of education. This means that parents' positive comments, compliments and words of advice go a long way in boosting the reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities. Parental support and encouragement helps in reducing frustration and lack of motivation to read. Also, parents' ability to provide necessary materials and various aids that can help students learn and read faster and better, influence the reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities. Thus, the socio-economic status of parents of students with learning disabilities is essential and predicts the reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities.

Besides, the study submits that both teacher and parent factors are essential in the education of students with learning disabilities. Teachers must not only rely on their educational degrees because this is not the only factor needed for effectiveness. Teachers' use of remedial methodologies in order to perform optimally in reading activities is encouraged. Thus, teachers of students with learning disabilities must endeavour to incorporate relevant and necessary methodologies of reinforcement into the teaching of these students.

### **Recommendations**

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

- i. School administrators and teachers should ensure that they educate parents of students with learning disabilities on the need to provide adequate verbal support and encouragement to their wards in order to improve the students' reading self-efficacy.
- ii. Students with learning disabilities should be assisted to build more interest towards reading knowing how much self-efficacy can help develop their reading skills thereby making them better students.
- ii. Notwithstanding the socio-economic status of parents, they should be encouraged to provide necessary educational materials that can assist students with learning disabilities to undertake reading assignments and follow through the reading tasks till they complete them.



- iv. Teachers must incorporate all their competencies in the teaching of students with learning disabilities including the use of praise and reinforcement to ensure that the reading self-efficacy of the students is enhanced as this would lead to improved academic achievement.
- v. Teachers and parents should strengthen their partnership system so they can collaboratively build the reading self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities. Parents and teachers should recognize and understand their roles and responsibilities towards the advancement of the reading abilities of students with learning disabilities.

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