



Awareness, Knowledge, and Attitude of Teachers towards Specific Learning Difficulties

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ABSTRACT

Millions of students globally experience Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs) such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, which represent significant educational challenges. The role of teachers is fundamental in identifying and providing assistance to students experiencing learning difficulties. The study examined the level of awareness and knowledge of secondary school teachers regarding SLDs and explored whether sex, educational qualification, and years of teaching experience influence their attitudes toward these students. With five hypotheses guiding the study, the study employed a descriptive survey design with 125 teachers who were randomly selected using a stratified sampling technique. A structured questionnaire, which assessed awareness, knowledge, and attitudes regarding dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, was used to obtain data. Validity was ensured using expert judgement and empirical evidence from factor analysis. Cronbach's alpha was used to obtain reliability coefficients of .973, .950, and .849 for the three sections of the scale, respectively, while a coefficient of .975 was obtained for the scale as a whole. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, t-test, and one-way ANOVA. The research reveals that there were statistically significant differences in teachers' levels of awareness and knowledge of SLDs. However, sex, educational qualification, and years of teaching experience did not significantly influence teachers' attitudes toward students with SLDs. The findings highlight the need for continued professional development to strengthen teachers' understanding of learning difficulties and enhance the support provided to students in secondary schools.

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INTRODUCTION

In this modern era of technology and information, academic learning is at the crux of human success. The ability to read, write, and calculate effectively is no longer just an academic requirement. It has evolved to become a fundamental gateway that leads to stability and meaningful engagement as the world becomes more complex (Lechner, 2023; Meehan et al., 2023). Globally, education systems place immense value on literacy and numeracy. They are seen as essential outcomes of schooling and indicators of future life prospects. When an individual experiences significant and persistent difficulty mastering these foundational skills, that person begins to experience challenges that go far beyond the classroom. Their self-esteem, career opportunities, and general quality of life may be affected (American Psychiatric Association, 2022; Snowling & Hulme, 2021). This group of enduring patterns of learning difficulties is formally recognised as Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs).

SLDs are a broad category of neurodevelopmental disorders that affect learning and the use of academic skills like reading, writing, and arithmetic. These difficulties are neither caused by a lack of intelligence, sensory impairments, nor by poor educational opportunities. They are intrinsic to the individual and may persist into adulthood (American Psychiatric Association, 2022; Georgitsi et al., 2021). Specific learning disorders (SLDs) affect approximately 5–15% of school-age children worldwide, according to the American Psychiatric Association (2022). Among the most common SLDs are dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; World Health Organization, 2021). Dyslexia affects reading and spelling due to phonological processing challenges, while dyscalculia disrupts number understanding and mathematical calculations. Dysgraphia, on the other hand, impairs handwriting and written expression. These conditions are associated with neurobiological differences in how the brain processes specific types of information (Martinez-Lincoln et al., 2023). The prevalence and impact of SLDs point to the importance of understanding these conditions within educational contexts (Snowling, 2013; Laguillo et al., 2023). When these difficulties are not identified and addressed promptly, they may lead to persistent academic challenges and poor educational outcomes (Fletcher et al., 2007). Longitudinal evidence further suggests that untreated learning difficulties can limit access to higher education and stable employment opportunities in adulthood (Ritchie & Bates, 2013).

Teachers occupy a central position in the educational response to SLDs. Because academic skills are developed and evaluated within the school setting, teachers are often the first to recognise persistent patterns of learning difficulty. However, their awareness, knowledge, and attitudes toward these difficulties significantly influence the effectiveness of the support they provide (Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Washburn et al., 2011; Westwood, 2018). In secondary schools, where academic demands increase, students with SLDs often face heightened challenges, making comprehensive teacher education and training especially necessary.

Teacher awareness has to do with the degree to which teachers are able to recognize and identify learning difficulties in their students. Without proper awareness, teachers may overlook SLD indicators, attributing poor academic performance to lack of effort. Increased teacher awareness enables timely identification and support for students with SLDs, which fundamentally enhances their academic and social development (Snowling, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2024). Several studies have examined teachers' awareness of learning difficulties. Some studies report moderate to high awareness among teachers, particularly when professional training is provided (Makgato et al., 2022; Dani et al., 2024). However, other studies suggest that teachers frequently face challenges when attempting to accurately recognize specific learning disabilities within classroom settings (Knight, 2018; Mekonnen, 2023).

Knowledge level is equally important. It refers to the depth of understanding teachers have about the nature, causes, characteristics, and intervention strategies related to SLDs. Highly knowledgeable teachers are better equipped to implement effective teaching strategies and provide appropriate resources (Fletcher

et al., 2007; Swanson et al., 2018; Al-Hendawi et al., 2024). A range of studies has also examined teachers' knowledge of learning disabilities. Some studies report that teachers possess basic knowledge of SLD characteristics but display gaps in specific instructional strategies (Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2012; Soriano-Ferrer et al., 2016; Laguillo-Rebolledo et al., 2023). Several studies have revealed that a significant number of teachers hold misconceptions regarding learning disabilities and lack adequate training in this area (Washburn et al., 2011; Solheim et al., 2024; Sansano & Jiménez-Fernández, 2024). Such findings indicate that teachers' knowledge of SLDs is multifaceted and may be shaped by factors such as their training, years of teaching experience, sex, just to mention a few.

Attitude toward students with SLDs has an important role to play when it comes to educational outcomes. Teachers' attitude refers to their beliefs, the way they feel, and their predispositions toward students with learning difficulties. Positive attitudes include empathy, patience, and willingness to adapt teaching methods to make room for different learning needs (Woodcock & Nicoll, 2022; Ginevra et al., 2022). Studies have provided evidence that supportive teacher attitudes correlate with better student engagement, higher self-esteem, and improved academic performance (Graham & Harris, 2005; Yang et al., 2024). There are many factors that may shape teachers' attitudes toward students with learning difficulties. Some of these well-researched factors are in line with inclusive education practices, and they include sex, years of teaching experience, and educational background. According to some research, female teachers exhibit a stronger tendency to maintain positive outlooks compared to male educators about inclusive education (Alzyoudi et al., 2021; Dzakadzie et al., 2023). Furthermore, other research has additionally explored the role of teachers' professional expertise and certifications; they suggest that teachers with more training or experience in the classroom have better attitudes and knowledge about inclusive practices (Charitaki et al., 2022; Soriano-Ferrer et al., 2016). Conversely, a number of studies report that demographic variables often show limited influence on teachers' attitudes when broader professional training and institutional factors are taken into account (Tenback et al., 2024; van Steen & Wilson, 2020). Such conflicting data indicate that the role of demographic characteristics in shaping how teachers view learners who face instructional challenges remains inconclusive and may vary across educational contexts.

The relationship between awareness, knowledge level, and attitude is interdependent. Awareness of SLDs can lead to a desire for increased knowledge, which in turn fosters more positive attitudes. Conversely, lack of awareness can lead to inadequate knowledge and negative attitudes, creating cycles that increase the marginalization of students with SLDs (Johnson & Erasmus, 2024; Uthaman & Thomas, 2020). Professional development programs addressing all three variables simultaneously have proven most effective in establishing equitable learning spaces (Dani et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2024). However, significant gaps remain in this area, leading to disparities in support provided to students. In secondary schools, students with SLDs face tougher challenges as academic work intensifies and social pressures increase. Teachers who understand SLDs are better positioned to employ effective strategies like individualized lesson planning and adaptive digital tools (Swanson et al., 2018).

Although prior research has investigated the awareness, knowledge, and attitudes of teachers toward learning difficulties, the results are still not consistent across contexts. While some studies show that teachers are adequately prepared, others point to serious gaps in their knowledge and training. Likewise, there is limited empirical data from developing nations, as the majority of the research that has been done so far has been done in Western educational backgrounds. As Nigeria continues to enhance its educational system, there is an increasing need for educators who can identify and assist learners with SLDs. The outcome of this research can help identify those who need professional development. It can also inform educational policy and practice and ultimately contribute to better support systems for students with SLDs in Rivers State by offering empirical data on teacher preparedness. Very importantly, these observations align with international frameworks that promote accessible, high-quality learning environments, as buttressed by United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4. This represents a strong advocacy call for equitable instructional

access for all, inclusive of students with learning difficulties. It is for this purpose that this research was carried out to ascertain the awareness, knowledge, and attitude of secondary school teachers toward SLDs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the awareness and knowledge of secondary school teachers regarding Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs) and to explore whether teachers' attitudes toward students with SLDs vary according to sex, educational qualification, and years of teaching experience in secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the level of awareness among secondary school teachers regarding SLDs
2. Assess the knowledge level of secondary school teachers regarding SLDs.
3. Examine the influence of sex on the attitude of secondary school teachers toward SLDs.
4. Investigate the influence of educational qualification on the attitude of secondary school teachers toward SLDs.
5. Evaluate the influence of years of teaching experience on the attitude of secondary school teachers toward SLDs.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quantitative descriptive survey research design was employed. This design allows the collection of broad, generalizable data and in-depth insights, enabling a thorough examination of teachers' awareness, knowledge, and attitudes toward specific learning difficulties.

Respondents

The population of the study encompassed 800 secondary school teachers in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Utilizing sex as the criterion for stratification, a sample of 125 teachers was selected using the stratified random sampling method.

Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. This tool was organized into two distinct sections, designated as Parts A and B. Part A collected demographic data including sex, age, educational qualification, years of teaching experience, and school type. Part B comprised three sections measuring:

Section 1 was on Awareness of SLDs using a 4-point Likert scale (*Very Highly Aware, Highly Aware, Aware, Not Aware*). Section 2 was on the Knowledge of SLDs. This comprises items assessing teachers' knowledge about the causes, characteristics, and intervention strategies for SLDs using a 4-point Likert scale (*Very Knowledgeable, Knowledgeable, Not Knowledgeable, Not Knowledgeable at All*). Lastly, section 3 measured attitudes toward students with SLDs. This was made up of Items evaluating teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, willingness to make accommodations, and confidence in teaching students with SLDs using a 4-point Likert scale (*Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Expert review was used to establish both face and content validity by three specialists in Educational Measurement and Evaluation. An expert committee in education, psychology, and special education evaluated each item for relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Formulation of the instrument items was grounded in existing SLD research documentation. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, and a pilot study of 30 respondents yielded the following coefficients: overall scale ($\alpha = .975$), awareness subscale ($\alpha = .973$), knowledge subscale ($\alpha = .950$), and attitude subscale ($\alpha = .849$), all meeting the threshold of $\alpha \geq .70$. interpreted as highly reliable.

Data Analysis

Research Questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while hypotheses were tested using one-way ANOVA and independent-samples t-tests. Associated hypotheses were tested at a significance level of $\alpha = .05$ using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the Item Response Theory application for Excel add-in, and Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant difference in the level of awareness among secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State

Table 1.1: Mean, standard deviation, and One-Way ANOVA Analysis of the level of awareness among secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in secondary schools

Awareness Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	F
Not aware at all	4	15.0000	.00000	3,121	24 8.9 5
Not very Aware	14	26.0000	5.53312		
Highly Aware	41	39.4146	4.20699		
Very Highly Aware	66	53.6970	4.48920		
Total	125	44.6720	11.82110		

Table 1.1 shows the analysis of the data on the level of awareness among secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties (SLD). A small fraction of the teachers, categorized as "Not Aware at All," show a mean score of 15.0000 with a standard deviation of 0.0000. This indicates a uniform and complete lack of awareness regarding specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia among these teachers. Another group, classified as "Not very Aware," has a mean score of 26.0000 with a standard deviation of 5.53312. This suggests that while these teachers have some awareness of SLD, there is considerable variability in their understanding. The largest proportion of teachers falls into the "Highly Aware" category, with a mean score of 39.4146 and a standard deviation of 4.20699, indicating that most teachers have a significant understanding of SLD, though with some differences in their level of knowledge. The highest awareness level is found among those in the "Very Highly Aware" group, with a mean score of 53.6970 and a standard deviation of 4.48920. This reflects a deep and comprehensive understanding of SLD

among these teachers. Generally, the total mean score across all levels of awareness is 44.6720, with a standard deviation of 11.82110, indicating that, on average, teachers possess a relatively high level of awareness regarding specific learning difficulties. The table also reveals that the computed $F(3, 121) = 248.950$, $P < .05$, i.e. $p = .000$, i.e. $p = .000$ is less than 0.05 and this is statistically significant at the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the level of awareness among secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia in secondary schools is rejected and the alternate accepted. This implies that there is a difference in the level of awareness between those who are very highly aware, highly aware, not very aware, and those teachers who are not aware at all of specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, and this difference is statistically significant.

Hypothesis 2. There is no significant difference in the knowledge level among secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State

Table 2.1: Mean, standard deviation, and One-Way ANOVA of the Knowledge level of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in secondary schools

Knowledge Levels	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	F
Not Knowledgeable at all	1	15.0000	.		
Not very Knowledgeable	7	23.2857	3.49830		
Knowledgeable	50	37.6600	5.58646	3,121	136
					.38
Very Knowledgeable	67	51.2985	4.23555		
Total	125	43.9840	9.92308		

The knowledge level of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area was analysed to determine the extent to which these educators understand and recognize such challenges. Among the teachers, a very small group of just one individual was found to be not knowledgeable at all, with a mean score of 15.00 and no variation in their responses. A slightly larger group of teachers, comprising seven individuals, fell into the category of being not very knowledgeable, with a mean score of 23.29 and a standard deviation of 3.50. The majority of teachers demonstrated a higher level of knowledge. Fifty teachers were categorized as knowledgeable, with a mean score of 37.66 and a standard deviation of 5.59. This group shows moderate variability, suggesting that while they possess a good understanding of specific learning difficulties, there is still room for improvement in their knowledge. The largest group, consisting of 67 teachers, was classified as very knowledgeable. This group had a mean score of 51.30 and a standard deviation of 4.24, indicating a high level of understanding and a relatively consistent knowledge base among these teachers. The overall mean score across all teachers was 43.98, with a standard deviation of 9.92, reflecting a generally high but varied level of knowledge regarding specific learning difficulties among secondary school teachers in the area. The table also reveals that the computed $F(3, 121) = 136.389$, $P < .05$ i.e., $p = .000$, and $p = .000$ is less than 0.05; this is statistically significant at the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the level of knowledge among secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is a difference in the level of knowledge between those who are very knowledgeable, highly knowledgeable, not very knowledgeable,

and those teachers who are not knowledgeable at all about specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, and this difference is statistically significant.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant influence of sex on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State
Table 3.1: Mean, SD, and independent-samples t-test analysis of the significant influence of sex on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	t	Sig	Decision
Male	59	31.93	4.46	123	.340	.735	Accept Ho
Female	66	32.19	4.21	p > 0.05			

Table 3.1 shows the influence of sex on the attitude of secondary school teachers towards specific learning difficulties. The results show that female teachers had a slightly higher mean attitude score ($M = 32.1970$, $SD = 4.21068$) compared to their male counterparts ($M = 31.9322$, $SD = 4.46776$). This suggests that, on average, female teachers might have a marginally more positive attitude towards specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia than male teachers. However, the small difference in mean scores, coupled with the similar standard deviations, indicates that sex may not have a significant influence on attitudes in this context. The attitudes of both male and female teachers are generally positive, with only slight variations between them. Table 3.1 also reveals that the computed $t(123) = .340$, $P > .05$, i.e. $p = .735$, is greater than 0.05, and this is statistically not significant at the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant influence of sex on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in secondary schools is accepted, and the alternative is rejected. This implies that the difference between male secondary school teachers' attitudes and female secondary school teachers' attitudes towards specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia is not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 4. There is no significant influence of educational qualification on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State

Table 4.1: Mean, standard deviation, and One-Way ANOVA analyses of the influence of educational qualification on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties.

Educational Qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	F	Sig
Diploma	6	29.3333	11.62182			
B.Sc	63	32.5873	3.59496			
M.Sc	42	31.4524	3.97064	3, 121	1.539	.208

Educational Qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	F	Sig
Ph.D	14	32.7857	2.83328			
Total	125	32.0720	4.31833			

Table 4.1 shows the influence of educational qualification on the attitude of secondary school teachers toward specific learning difficulties. Teachers holding a Diploma exhibited the lowest mean attitude score of 29.33, with a relatively high standard deviation of 11.62. This suggests that those with a Diploma have more varied attitudes towards specific learning difficulties, with some potentially less favourable views. Teachers with a B.Sc degree showed a higher mean attitude score of 32.59, with a much lower standard deviation of 3.59. This suggests that B.Sc holders generally have a positive and more uniform attitude towards specific learning difficulties.

M.Sc degree holders had a mean attitude score of 31.45 with a standard deviation of 3.97, which is slightly lower than the B.Sc group. This suggests that while M.Sc holders generally maintain a positive attitude, there might be slight variations in their perspectives, potentially due to differing specializations or focus areas within their advanced studies. Ph.D. holders demonstrated the highest mean attitude score of 32.79, with the lowest standard deviation of 2.83. This group's attitudes towards specific learning difficulties are the most positive and consistent. Generally, the analysis reveals some variation in attitude scores across different qualification levels, though these descriptive patterns revealed no significant differences between groups. This is critical for fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment for all students.

Table 4.1 also reveals that the computed $F(3, 121) = 1.539$, $P > .05$, i.e. $p = .208$, i.e. $p = .208$, which is greater than 0.05, and this is statistically not significant at the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant influence of educational qualification on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia is accepted. This implies that the difference in the attitude towards specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia between those teachers with Diploma, B.Sc., M.Sc. and Ph.D. is statistically not significant.

Hypothesis 5. There is no significant influence of years of experience on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State

Table 5.1: Mean and standard deviation and one-way ANOVA analyses of the influence of years of experience on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties

Years Of Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	F	Sig
Less than 5yrs	31	31.5806	5.15606			
5-10yrs	35	33.2857	3.82385			
11-15yrs	41	32.2683	3.99390	3,121	2.399	.071

More than 15yrs	18	30.1111	3.83312
Total	125	32.0720	4.31833

The influence of years of experience on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State was examined to understand how the length of time spent in the teaching profession might affect teachers' perspectives on these issues in Table 5.1. Teachers with less than 5 years of experience had a mean attitude score of 31.58, with a standard deviation of 5.16. Those with 5-10 years of experience showed a higher mean attitude score of 33.29, with a lower standard deviation of 3.82. This indicates that teachers in this experience range generally have a more positive and consistent attitude towards specific learning difficulties. Teachers with 11-15 years of experience had a mean attitude score of 32.27, with a standard deviation of 3.99. This group's attitudes are positive and relatively stable. Interestingly, teachers with more than 15 years of experience had a lower mean attitude score of 30.11, with a standard deviation of 3.83. This suggests that more experienced teachers may have slightly less positive attitudes towards specific learning difficulties compared to those with fewer years of experience. Generally, the analysis reveals that the attitude towards specific learning difficulties among secondary school teachers varies with years of experience. Those with 5-10 years of experience seem to have the most positive and consistent attitudes. Furthermore, Table 5.1 shows that the computed $F(3, 121) = 2.399$, $P > .05$, i.e. $p = .071$ i.e. $p = .071$ is greater than 0.05 and is statistically not significant at the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant influence of years of experience on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia in secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area in Rivers State is therefore accepted. This implies that the difference in the attitude towards specific learning difficulties of dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia between those teachers with less than 5 years, 5-10 years, 11-15 years and 15 years and above is statistically not significant.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings indicate that there was a statistically significant difference in the level of awareness among secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties. The statistical analysis rejected the null hypothesis, confirming that there are meaningful variations in teacher awareness across the study sample. This finding is in agreement with previous studies showing variations in teacher awareness of learning disabilities (Makgato et al., 2022; Washburn et al., 2011; Gulzar et al., 2023). It further aligns with studies demonstrating that professional development and experience influence awareness levels significantly (Soriano-Ferrer et al., 2016; Dani et al., 2024; Uçak & Demirok, 2023). This result, however, contradicts the findings of Nushi and Eshraghi (2023) and Mekonnen (2023), who found that most teachers were unaware of SLDs. This difference may be related to discrepancies in the individual demographic attributes of the teachers sampled, such as their teaching experience or professional background. The reported high levels of awareness that are currently prevalent in the study are a reflection of the growing public awareness of learning difficulties in our society today. This is evident through media coverage and advocacy efforts. Also, there has been a growing global emphasis on inclusive education within educational policy frameworks spanning more than a decade. Consequently, attention to the identification and support of students with learning difficulties within mainstream classrooms has been heightened.

According to the analysis's findings, there was a statistically significant difference in the level of knowledge among secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties. This outcome is consistent with studies reporting significant knowledge variability across specific domains (Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2012; Soriano-Ferrer et al., 2016; Laguillo et al., 2023). The result obtained disagrees with some studies, which found that many teachers' knowledge about specific learning disabilities is insufficient (Washburn et al., 2011; Alahmadi, 2019; Sansano & Jiménez-Fernández, 2024). Differences in area of study and other demographic details could account for this divergent result. Based on the findings, it is

encouraging that a high percentage of teachers demonstrated adequate knowledge of SLDs. This suggests that teachers are becoming more familiar with learning difficulties encountered in the classroom. However, the differences observed in knowledge levels indicate that this understanding is not uniform among teachers. Such variation may reflect differences in teachers' training, teaching experience, and individual exposure to students with learning difficulties.

The findings of the study indicate that there was no significant influence of sex on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties. This is an indication that all the teachers (male and female) have been exposed to similar inclusive education principles during their professional preparation and career development. This finding aligns with studies that showed minimal effects of sex on attitudes toward inclusion (van Steen & Wilson, 2020; Savolainen et al., 2012; Ginevra et al., 2022; Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023). Nonetheless, some empirical studies have reported contrasting outcomes. For example, Alzyoudi et al. (2021) and Dzakadzie et al. (2023) reported that female teachers were disposed to having more favorable attitudes toward students with disabilities and inclusive educational practices than male teachers. The divergence between these findings and the results of the study under review may be attributed to contextual differences in teacher preparation systems and institutional policies. A plausible explanation for the observed outcome in the current study is that male and female teachers may have had comparable exposure to training and career development programmes related to inclusive learning. When teachers receive similar professional guidance and operate within the same institutional expectations, their perspectives toward supporting students with learning difficulties are likely to become more similar. This suggests that attitudes toward inclusive educational approaches could be more influenced by shared professional experiences and educational values as opposed to differences in sex among teachers.

The study's findings revealed that there was no significant influence of educational qualification on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties, though descriptive patterns suggested some variation across qualification levels. This finding aligns with that of Ediyanto and Kawai (2023), San Martin et al. (2021), and van Steen and Wilson (2020), who found that demographic variables such as educational qualification often have limited influence on teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive learning when broader professional and institutional elements are considered. This contrasts with systematic review evidence indicating that teachers with higher qualifications generally hold more favourable attitudes toward inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002), as well as recent evidence showing significant differences in attitudes according to teachers' highest degree completed (Charitaki et al., 2022). One possible explanation for this difference is that teacher training curricula may currently accord higher priority to integrative learning models across all levels of training. The non-significant finding in this study indicates that inclusive education content has been integrated across teacher preparation programmes at all qualification levels, ensuring that teachers acquire similar attitudinal foundations regardless of their qualifications.

The result also indicates that there was no significant influence of years of experience on the attitude of secondary school teachers regarding specific learning difficulties. This is in agreement with the findings of Tenback et al. (2024) and van Steen and Wilson (2020), who collectively reported that years of teaching experience often show little or no measurable impact on the attitude of teachers toward inclusive education once teachers operate within similar professional and institutional environments. However, this outcome is in contrast with the report by Carvalho et al. (2024) and Soriano-Ferrer et al. (2016), who found that teachers with greater professional experience or additional training tended to be more knowledgeable and display more favourable attitudes toward inclusive educational practices. The divergence between these findings may be because of differences in teacher training structures and access to professional development opportunities across educational contexts. The lack of an experience effect in the present study may suggest that teachers in this context are exposed to similar policies and training related to inclusive education regardless of their career stage. Over time, these shared professional experiences shape teachers'

perspectives in comparable ways. This causes both novice and veteran teachers to develop similarly positive attitudes toward supporting students with SLDs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusively, the findings gathered in the study reveal that secondary school teachers generally possess an adequate level of awareness and knowledge of Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs), even though there are differences among individual teachers. Additionally, the attitude of teachers toward learners with learning disabilities was generally favorable, indicating a willingness to support inclusive teaching methods. However, the variation in awareness and knowledge levels shows that teachers' comprehension of SLDs is not totally consistent, and that some teachers might still need more assistance in identifying and resolving these issues in the learning environment. The result of the study also indicated that the attitude of teachers toward students with SLDs was not really influenced by sex, years of teaching experience, or educational background. This indicates that teachers from different backgrounds might have received comparable standards and professional guidance concerning inclusive education. All things considered, the study offers insightful information about how well-prepared secondary school teachers are to recognize and assist students who struggle with SLDs within secondary school settings.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that teachers be motivated to keep expanding their knowledge of specific learning challenges through opportunities for professional development and practical classroom exposure. To better equip teachers to identify and offer meaningful aid to students with a variety of learning needs, teacher education programs should also enhance training on inclusive teaching methods and learning challenges. Schools should encourage collaborative professional environments where teachers can exchange methods, insights, and materials about helping students with learning challenges. In order to support more inclusive learning environments in schools, educational authorities and policymakers should also offer suitable instructional resources and opportunities for ongoing training that can enable teachers to adequately manage the unique demands of students with SLDs.

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