

***Effectiveness of Community Participation in Rehabilitation Programmes and  
Counselling in Promoting Psycho-Social Adjustment of Persons with Special  
Needs in Edo State, Nigeria***

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**Abstract**

*The study investigated the perception of Special needs pupils on the effectiveness of community participation in rehabilitation programmes and counselling in promoting psycho-social adjustment among persons with special needs in Edo State, Nigeria. The study employed the descriptive survey design approach with a population of 380 pupils. The sample was 120 pupils with disabilities made up of 60 hearing impaired and 60 visually impaired from Ivbiore primary school (school for persons with special needs) in Benin City. An instrument titled Variables of Psycho-social Adjustment of People with Special Needs, with reliability coefficient of 0.74, was used in data collection. The results indicated that the special needs pupils perceive community participation in rehabilitation programmes and counselling service as being effective in promoting psycho-social adjustment of persons with special needs. The study therefore suggests that effective counselling and joint community participation is needed in promoting psycho-social adjustment for persons with special needs. Attitude acceptance that will help in building the right self-concept and self-esteem in these persons with special needs is also recommended.*

**Keywords:** Community, Participation, Counselling, Special needs, Attitude

**Introduction**

Persons with special needs experience trauma, disorganization, fear, low self-concept and uncertainty that could only be solved through positive attitudes towards them. If these problems are solved, the individual will live fulfilling life otherwise, more deep seated psycho-social problems such as anxiety, withdrawal, inferiority, depression and low self-esteem may occur which lead to maladjustment. It is obvious that individuals with special needs require both community participation and counselling to promote psycho social adjustment in order to live fulfilling lives.

Well-adjusted special needs person utilizes his potential, fulfilling lives and contributes his quota to economic growth and general development of the country. Thus, helping a person with special needs through counselling with a lot of community participation to overcome the enormous negative, social and psychological effect of disability is a noble task for all.

The special needs person is that person who had deviated from either below or above the group norm intellectually, physically, socially or emotionally due to retarded growth and development or loss of body member and would require special service to maximize his potentials. According to Eduwen and Osagie-Obazee (2004) and Obani (2004), persons with special needs are exceptional persons. They are exceptional because they may have problem in thinking, seeing, hearing, speaking e.t.c. The term includes both handicap and the gifted. Persons with special needs find it difficult to cope, not only in school or work but also in other aspects of life. How well adjusted a person with special needs is will depend largely on how accepted he feels within his family and the community (Ogbebor, 2005).

Adjustment is the interaction between a person and his environment; in other words both personal and environmental factors work side by side in adjustment. Both play an important role in his wellbeing. During this process, the individual and his environment interact with each other and strike a balance (Dawis, 2002). When such a balance happens then we can say that the individual is well - adjusted. If not, we say that the individual is maladjusted. According to Ajobiwe (2000), a person who is capable of dealing successfully with life problems, is well-adjusted. If he lacks the potentialities for problem solving, he is then maladjusted. The concept of adjustment refers to active, creative efforts to live effectively. Psycho-social adjustment refers to adjusting to social and psychological activities, such as interacting, conforming to home and social expectations, freedom from handicapping, frustration, anxiety, tolerance and contentment.

A community could be viewed in terms of all the people or group of people living within a specific geographical area such as a village, a town, a city, a neighbourhood or even a whole State (Omoruyi, 2001). On the other hand, community participation in special education is the process where all stakeholders that is, the home, school, society, neighbourhood are involved in the development of the special need persons (Osagie-Obazee, 2008). The importance of the community on the overall development of people with special needs cannot be over emphasized. The special needs person acquires his identity and feeling of belonging from the family and from his immediate community; whatever attitudes the community exhibits towards the person with special needs has the potential of enhancing or retarding his psychosocial development.

“Attitudes” acceptance is very favourable to growth and wellbeing of the special needs person. This attitude confers on him a feeling of belongingness and contentment in the community. The inference is that the community regards him with equal affection as other persons within the community. Acceptance is therefore the best attitude the community can display toward the special needs persons (Ayeleso, 2008). The participation and contributions of the community (home, neighbourhood, school) in the development of psycho-social adjustment of special needs person is very prominent. The home, the school and the immediate neighbourhood are to complement the effort of one another. The link between these factors is important, break down in link will adversely affect the development of these group of persons (Osagie-Obazee, 2008).

Community participation is a philosophical concept which serves the entire community by providing for the psycho-social adjustment needs of all community members. Community participation would proffer avenue for integration and inclusion of persons with special needs with their able bodied counterparts to share experience and knowledge if properly organized to be inclusive of counselling and innovative programmes.

Counselling as used in this paper refers to a wide selection of services and activities that counsellors choose to help persons with special needs to adjust to their psycho social needs. The focus is on the persons with special needs within their community. Oladele (1991) stressed that counselling has been used to denote a wide range of procedures including advice giving, support in times of trouble or need, encouragement, information giving and test interpretation.

Psycho-social adjustment of persons with special needs as it relates to counselling and community participation connotes continuing capacity building and personal adjustment of persons with special needs through understanding of self and others, acquisition of basic knowledge, having the right self-concept and self-esteem. Persons with special needs are faced with many overt and covert problems and challenges caused by their handicapping conditions, mental distortion and emotional problems that have hitherto distorted their mental perception and their psycho-social adjustment. These scenarios are compounded by lack of acceptance and negative perception of persons with special needs by the community that have necessitated low self-esteem, self-withdrawal among others.

The above suggests that for persons with special needs to be fully adjusted psychologically and socially, and to be able to live happily with others in the society, they need socio-personal development counselling and community collaborative participation of the family, school, society, NGOs and other stakeholders. Olawale

(2000) and Iwuama and Ekwe (2010) opined that personal-socio counselling involves resolving problems and helping the individual with special needs to achieve self-restructuring, positive self-image, self-acceptance, decision making skills and personal adjustment issues.

The much desired achievement of health for all stated for the year 2015 (not achieved) calls for attention to the psycho-social adjustment of persons with special needs in Nigeria. Anxiety, frustration, low self-esteem, withdrawal and rejection rate high among this group. This is coupled with lack of acceptance and negative concepts of the community towards persons with disabilities. These scenarios pose serious concern to all. The aim of this paper was focused on promoting psycho-social adjustment of persons with special needs through community participation and counselling.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How effective is community participation in psycho-social adjustment of persons with special needs?
2. How effective is counselling on the psycho-social adjustment of persons with special needs?

### **Methodology**

The scope of the study is essentially on community participation in rehabilitation programmes and counselling in promoting psycho-social adjustment of persons with special needs in Edo State, with special interest on pupils with hearing and visual impairment in Ivbiore Primary School, Benin City. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. A total of 120 pupils were purposively selected from 380 disabled pupils at the School for the Persons with Special Needs in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. They were made up of 60 hearing impaired and 60 visually impaired pupils.

The study adapted and used a standardized instrument designed by Danesy (2008). The instrument contained 13 items; the scale is designed on a four point Likert scale with response pattern ranging from truly, not true, disagreed and agreed. In this work, the response was modified to range from strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. The scale has reliability coefficient of 0.74. Data collected were analyzed using frequency count and simple percentage.

### **Presentation of results**

**Research Question 1:** How effective is community participation in psycho-social adjustment of persons with special needs?

**Table1:** Showing Frequency Count and Percentage Analysis of Effectiveness of Community Participation on Psycho-Social Adjustment of Pupils with Special Needs

S/N	Sex	No	Types of disabilities	Items	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed		Total	
					FC	%	FC	%	FC	%	FC	%	FC	%
1.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Community participation can make People with special needs acquire conscientiousness	38	63.33	12	20	10	16.67	0	0	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		35	58.33	10	16.67	8	13.33	7	11.67	60	100
2.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Community participation provides value certification for People with special needs.	43	71.67	7	11.67	8	13.33	2	3.33	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		44	73.33	5	8.33	7	11.67	4	6.67	60	100
3.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Community Participation enhances character education for people with special needs.	46	76.67	2	3.33	9	15	3	5	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		49	81.67	6	10	5	8.33	0	0	60	100
4.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Community participation can benefit persons with special needs through role playing.	44	73.67	7	11.67	4	6.67	5	8.33	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		40	66.67	8	13.33	8	13.33	4	6.67	60	100
5.	M	60	Hearing impaired	With reinforcement community participation can enhance the personality of persons with special needs.	40	66.67	8	13.33	10	16.67	8	13.33	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		42	70	8	13.33	10	16.67	8	13.33	60	100
6.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Through community participation persons with special needs can gain inner strength.	39	65	4	6.67	8	13.33	9	15	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		45	75	8	13.33	7	11.67	0	15	60	100
7.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Through community participation persons with special needs can gain respect from the society.	40	71.67	2	3.33	7	11.67	8	13.33	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		43	71.67	2	3.33	7	11.67	8	13.33	60	100

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Table 1 revealed that community participation if properly organized, inclusive of the home, school and the society at large, with full acceptance and attitude change, the persons with special needs will adjust and develop a healthy personality. With concept of character education and role playing among others, the community can reach out to these groups of persons and they will be able to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

**Research question 2:** How effective is counselling on the psycho-social adjustment of persons with special needs?

**Table2:** Showing Frequency Count and Percentage Analysis of Counselling in Prompting Psycho-social Adjustment of Pupils with Special Needs

S/N	Sex	No	Types of disabilities	Items	Very true		True		Disagree		Strongly Disagreed		Total	
					FC	%	FC	%	FC	%	FC	%	FC	%
1.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Counselling can make persons with special needs have a changed attitude	40	66.67	8	13.33	8	13.33	4	6.67	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		38	63.33	10	16.67	4	6.67	8	13.33	60	100
2.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Counselling can equip person with special needs with the skill of problem solving.	42	70	10	16.67	8	13.33	0	0	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		40	66.7	10	16.67	5	8.33	5	8.33	60	100
3.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Counselling can provide persons with special needs with information about self-concept	38	63.33	10	16.67	10	16.67	8	13.33	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		36	60	9	15	10	16.67	5	8.33	60	100
4.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Counselling could change the negative attitude of able bodied persons towards persons with special needs.	39	60	9	15	4	6.67	8	13.33	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		36	65	10	16.67	8	13.33	4	6.67	60	100
5.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Developmental counselling can enhance the self-efficacy of persons with special needs	34	56.67	16	26.67	5	8.33	5	8.33	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		42	70	10	16.67	8	13.33	0	0	60	100
6.	M	60	Hearing impaired	Counselling can create openness in the life of persons with special needs	45	75	8	13.33	4	6.67	3	5	60	100
	F	60	Visual impaired		44	73.33	5	8.33	7	11.67	4	6.67	60	100

FC – Frequency Count; % - Percentage

Table 2 revealed that recognition of counselling and its inclusion into community participation and rehabilitation programmes would promote healthy personality. Strategic and developmental counselling would bring about a change in attitude of person with special needs leading to an adjusted personality.

### **Discussion of findings**

From the findings of this study, it is evident that community participation in rehabilitation programmes for people with special needs is needful in the psychosocial adjustment of this group of people. Research evidence abounds to support these findings. Ayeleso (2008) and Osagie-Obazee (2008) point out that participation and contribution of the community (home, neighbourhood, school) in the development of psycho-social adjustment of special needs persons is very prominent. The variables that make up the immediate community of the special needs people are to complement one another. There is the need for proper organization of these variables alongside with full acceptance of this group of people.

Findings from the second research question revealed that counselling services are required for the psycho-social adjustment of special needs people. Olawale (2000) and Iwuama and Ekwe (2010) buttressed this finding. They opined that personal social counselling involves resolving problems and help in achieving self-restructuring through planned outreach programmes that borders on orientation and re-orientation. Strategies and developmental counselling services would bring about psycho-social adjustment of special needs people

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study revealed that community participation in rehabilitation programmes if properly organized will bring psycho-social adjustment of special needs people. The study equally shows that strategic and developmental counselling services would promote healthy personality. It therefore, becomes imperative that planned counselling services be included in community participation rehabilitation programmes for special needs people in order for them to be psycho-socially adjusted.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made;

1. Community should fully participate in the rehabilitation of persons with special needs to give a sense of belonging.
2. There is the need for attitude change and acceptance of persons with special needs by all.
3. Counselling should be done in a strategic and developmental manner to make it meaningful to the persons with special needs.

4. Community participation should always be combined in our society to combat the issue of unhealthy life style of persons with special needs.

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