Lecturers' Attitudes and Readiness toward Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Background*: Inclusive education plays a vital role in promoting equitable learning opportunities, particularly for students with intellectual disabilities in higher education institutions. The attitudes and readiness of lecturers to adopt inclusive teaching practices are crucial to the successful implementation of inclusive policies and pedagogies. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), this study investigates how lecturers' attitudes, perceived social expectations, and perceived behavioural control influence their readiness to teach students with intellectual disabilities in Nigerian higher education institutions.

Methods: The study adopted a descriptive survey design, involving 270 lecturers selected through accidental sampling from various higher education institutions across Nigeria. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to assess lecturers' attitudes, institutional expectations, and perceived control over inclusive teaching practices. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation, were used to analyze the data, while independent t-tests were employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results: The findings revealed that lecturers demonstrate a moderate to high level of readiness to implement inclusive teaching. Respondents reported willingness to participate in training, adopt inclusive strategies, and manage mixed-ability classrooms. Attitudes toward inclusion were largely positive. However, challenges were noted in areas such as adapting instructional materials and using assistive technologies, indicating limitations in perceived behavioural control.

Conclusions: The study affirms the relevance of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in explaining lecturers' readiness for inclusive teaching. Addressing capacity gaps through targeted training and institutional support is essential for advancing inclusive education and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Keywords: Inclusive education, lecturers' attitudes, Theory of Planned Behaviour, intellectual disabilities, readiness.

INTRODUCTON

In the 21st century, global educational reforms have increasingly emphasized the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities (IDs) in higher education institutions as both a fundamental human right and a strategic imperative for sustainable development. Intellectual disability, defined by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, affects an estimated 1% to 3% of the world's population. This demographic is frequently marginalized within educational systems, particularly in developing nations, where resources and awareness are limited Almutairi *et al*. [1]. The principle of inclusive education has gained broad acceptance in policy discourses and legal frameworks. However, its effective implementation in higher education remains inconsistent, especially in low- and middle-income countries such as Nigeria [2,3]. At the core of inclusive education practices is the role of lecturers, whose attitudes, competencies, and readiness significantly influence the success or failure of inclusive strategies at the tertiary level.

While many higher education institutions have endorsed inclusive education policies, their

implementation often falls short due to a lack of faculty preparedness, insufficient institutional support, and persistent misconceptions about the abilities of students with intellectual disabilities [4, 5]. For example, Kumar *et al*. [6] found that some lecturers perceive students with intellectual disabilities as impediments to academic progress, citing concerns about maintaining syllabus coverage and academic rigor. Similarly, Turner *et al*. [7] reported that negative perceptions are frequently linked to limited professional exposure to inclusive teaching methods. Wilson and Miller [8] highlighted that many faculty members in North American institutions express uncertainty about their ability to effectively accommodate students with disabilities, citing gaps in training and institutional guidance.

Lecturer readiness is a multi-faceted construct that encompasses pedagogical knowledge, confidence, values, and willingness to adapt teaching practices. This readiness is further influenced by external variables such as access to professional development opportunities, institutional policy frameworks, and the availability of inclusive teaching resources [9, 10]. Nkosi and Madiba [11] observed that South African lecturers working in institutions with clear inclusion policies and support mechanisms were more likely to adopt inclusive strategies. O'Connell *et al*. [12] demonstrated that workshops and continuous training in inclusive pedagogy significantly improved faculty attitudes and instructional behaviors toward students with disabilities.

In contrast, lecturers lacking training or institutional encouragement often feel overwhelmed, expressing fears of diminished academic standards and uncertainty about best practices[13]. Johnson and Adams [14] argued that these negative perceptions often stem from inadequate institutional investment in faculty development, resulting in the fragmented implementation of inclusive education across departments and faculties. In many cases, faculty members are expected to implement inclusive practices without the requisite tools, training, or systemic support.

This challenge is particularly acute in Sub-Saharan Africa, where higher education institutions face systemic issues such as underfunding, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate infrastructure. Mwangi and Mutua [15] highlighted that despite increased enrollment of students with intellectual disabilities in Kenyan universities, many lecturers remain ill-equipped to support them. Similar findings were reported in Ghana, where Ofori and Boateng [16] observed that while individual faculty members often show a personal willingness to support inclusion, institutional support structures are largely absent or underdeveloped. These limitations significantly affect the capacity of lecturers to deliver quality education to all learners, including those with intellectual disabilities.

Although some universities in Nigeria have begun admitting students with intellectual disabilities, most do so without corresponding investments in training, support services, or inclusive curriculum design. These gaps raise critical concerns about lecturers' readiness to meet the learning needs of these students. Moreover, Lee and Carter [17] noted that across Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a limited amount of empirical data on the specific attitudes and preparedness of university lecturers toward inclusion, making it challenging to design evidence-based interventions.

Despite international declarations and national policies advocating inclusive education, the practical realization of these ideals in Nigerian higher education remains uncertain. Studies such as those by Smith and Jones [18] and Mensah [19] reveal that policy-level commitments are rarely translated into daily classroom practices. Instead, inclusion efforts are often symbolic or externally driven by NGOs and donor agencies, lacking sustainable integration into institutional culture [20, 21].

Given these limitations, this study aims to explore the attitudes and readiness of lecturers toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities in Nigeria's federal universities. Unlike previous studies that focus broadly on disability inclusion or are limited to primary education settings, this research targets the higher education context explicitly, addressing a significant gap in the literature. It aims to identify the institutional, pedagogical, and psychosocial factors that influence lecturers' ability to support inclusion. By doing so, the study contributes to both academic discourse and policy development, offering practical recommendations for faculty development, institutional reform, and the implementation of inclusive curricula.

Ultimately, this research aligns with the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. By illuminating the realities of inclusive education in Nigerian universities, this study aims to inform national education strategies and advocate for systemic reforms that empower lecturers to deliver inclusive teaching effectively.

This study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991), which offers a comprehensive psychological framework for analyzing how individual attitudes influence behavior. The TPB is particularly applicable to understanding lecturers' attitudes and readiness toward inclusive teaching of students with intellectual disabilities in higher education. According to the theory, behavioral intentions—and by extension, actual behavior—are determined by three key components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In this context, a lecturer's attitude reflects their beliefs and feelings about the value and feasibility of teaching students with intellectual disabilities. A positive outlook—such as recognizing the benefits of inclusion for individual student growth and social equity—can foster a supportive stance toward inclusive teaching practices.

Subjective norms refer to the perceived expectations from influential groups, such as peers, institutional leaders, and policy frameworks, which can significantly shape a lecturer's motivation to engage in inclusive teaching. When there is a perception that these referents endorse inclusive education, lecturers are more inclined to adopt such practices. Perceived behavioral control, on the other hand, captures a lecturer's sense of competence and the availability of necessary support and resources, such as training and inclusive teaching tools. A high level of perceived control not only strengthens a lecturer's confidence but also reinforces their readiness to implement inclusive practices. By weaving together these elements, the TPB provides a holistic understanding of how lecturers' attitudes and contextual enablers converge to influence their readiness and willingness to support inclusive education—an effort aligned with the goals of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

Research Objectives

The study examined lecturers' attitudes and readiness to teach students with intellectual disabilities in higher education institutions. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the attitudes of lecturers toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities in higher education institutions.

2. Assess the level of readiness of lecturers to implement inclusive teaching strategies for students with intellectual disabilities in higher education institutions.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study:

1. What are the prevailing attitudes of lecturers toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities in higher education institutions?

2. How ready are lecturers to adopt inclusive teaching practices for students with intellectual disabilities in higher education institutions?

Research Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no statistically significant difference inlecturers' attitudes toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities based on gender.

2. There is no statistically significant relationship between lecturers' attitudes and their level of readiness to teach students with intellectual disabilities, as measured by teaching experience.

METHODS

Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to assess lecturers' attitudes and readiness toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities in higher education institutions. This design was deemed appropriate as it enabled the researchers to collect quantitative data using a structured instrument to explore participants' existing perceptions and preparedness without manipulating any variables.

Participants

The participants in this study comprised 270 lecturers drawn from four federal universities within Nigeria's South East geopolitical zone, specifically those that offer academic programs in Special Education, Educational Psychology, and Curriculum Studies. These institutions were selected through accidental sampling due to the accessibility of the respondents and their relevance to the study's focus. The chosen universities are:Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State; Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State; and University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State. These four

institutions have active Faculties of Education with academic departments focused on the theoretical and practical aspects of inclusive education, making them suitable for investigating lecturers' attitudes and readiness toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities. A total of 270 lecturers were selected to participate. An accidental sampling technique was employed. This method involved approaching and selecting lecturers who were readily available and willing to participate in the study at the time of data collection. This approach was adopted due to time constraints, institutional access limitations, and the need to rely on the voluntary participation of academic staff.It was considered appropriate to enable the researchers to gather rich, experience-based data from lecturers in relevant departments who were accessible and cooperative.

Instrument

Data for the study were collected using a self-developed, structured questionnaire titled *Lecturers' Attitudes and Readiness toward Inclusive Teaching Questionnaire* (LARITQ). The instrument was designed to assess the prevailing attitudes of lecturers and their readiness to adopt inclusive teaching practices for students with intellectual disabilities in higher education institutions. It comprised two sections. Section A collected demographic information, including gender, academic rank, years of teaching experience, and departmental affiliation. Section B consisted of 16 structured items, divided into two subscales: eight items measuring attitudes (Items 1–8) and eight items measuring readiness (Items 9–16). All items were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), to Strongly Disagree (1).

To enhance transparency and ensure replicability, the exact items used in the instrument are listed below. The attitude items included: (1) I believe students with intellectual disabilities can succeed in higher education; (2) Teaching students with intellectual disabilities is a rewarding experience; (3) I feel confident interacting with students with intellectual disabilities; (4) Including students with intellectual disabilities enriches the learning environment; (5) I worry that students with intellectual disabilities may slow down class progress; (6) I prefer not to have students with intellectual disabilities in my classes; (7) I believe students with intellectual disabilities deserve the same opportunities; and (8) I would welcome more inclusive policies in my department. The readiness items were: (9) I have received adequate training to teach students with

intellectual disabilities; (10) I am willing to attend workshops on inclusive education practices; (11) I know how to adapt my teaching strategies for diverse learners; (12) My institution provides adequate resources for inclusive teaching; (13) I am ready to develop personal strategies for teaching students with intellectual disabilities; (14) I find it difficult to modify my teaching materials for inclusive needs; (15) I feel prepared to manage a mixed-ability classroom; and (16) I am confident in using assistive technology to support students with disabilities.

The instrument underwent face and content validation by four experts—two professors from the Department of Special Education, Educational Psychology, and Curriculum Studies, and two professors from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation—all of whom had over ten years of academic and research experience. To establish reliability, a pilot study was conducted involving 30 lecturers from two universities in the South-South geopolitical zone, which were excluded from the main study sample. The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.74 for the attitude subscale and 0.81 for the readiness subscale. These values indicate strong and acceptable reliability, ensuring the instrument's suitability for the main study.

Procedure

Data collection was carried out over six weeks to ensure comprehensive coverage and maximise response rates across participating institutions. A mixed-mode approach was adopted, combining face-to-face administration with electronic dissemination through Google Forms. The face-to-face method involved direct engagement with respondents on-site, particularly in institutions where physical access was feasible and in alignment with their academic calendar. This approach enabled real-time clarification of questionnaire items, enhanced participation, and ensured the completeness of responses. In institutions where physical interaction was limited due to scheduling constraints, distance, or institutional protocols, the electronic dissemination method was utilised. Questionnaires were distributed via institutional emails, professional networks, and relevant lecturer forums using Google Forms. This flexible and adaptive strategy accommodated variations in respondent availability and institutional operations, ultimately enhancing inclusivity and response diversity. The combined approach also helped mitigate potential data

collection delays and ensured that both technologically inclined and less tech-savvy participants were effectively reached.

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and analyzed using SPSS Version 25. Descriptive statistics—means, standard deviations, and frequencies—were used to summarize lecturers' attitudes and readiness. In addition, inferential statistics, such as independent t-tests, were conducted to determine significant differences in attitudes and readiness based on gender and teaching experience. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

Lecturers who participated in this study were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, and potential benefits of the research titled Lecturers' Attitudes and Readiness toward Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions. Before data collection, participants were provided with a detailed consent form, which they read, completed, and voluntarily signed, indicating their willingness to participate. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality of all information provided were assured and strictly maintained throughout the study. No identifying information was disclosed or used in reporting the findings. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Calabar, ensuring that all procedures adhered to established ethical standards for research involving human participants.

RESULTS

The data presented in Table **1** reveal that lecturers generally hold positive attitudes toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities in higher education institutions. The cluster mean of 3.07 indicates an overall agreement with the attitudinal statements, suggesting a favorable disposition toward inclusive education. Specifically, lecturers strongly agreed that students with intellectual disabilities can succeed in higher education (Mean = 3.34, SD = 0.84) and that inclusion enriches the learning environment (Mean = 3.30, SD = 0.83). Additionally, they expressed confidence in interacting with such students (Mean = 3.23) and affirmed the belief that students with

intellectual disabilities deserve equal opportunities (Mean = 3.23). Many lecturers also welcomed more inclusive policies in their departments (Mean = 3.34), further demonstrating their support for inclusive practices. However, some responses reflected mild concerns. For instance, although the statement "Teaching students with intellectual disabilities is a rewarding experience" received an average rating of 2.57, it still fell within the "Agree" category, indicating a modest level of agreement. Similarly, lecturers expressed slight concerns about the potential impacts on class progress (Mean = 2.65) and some reluctance about having such students in their classes (Mean = 2.96); yet, these responses still leaned toward agreement rather than opposition.In summary, the prevailing attitudes of lecturers are predominantly positive, with strong endorsement of inclusive values and openness to teaching students with intellectual disabilities. However, there are minor reservations regarding classroom dynamics.

The data presented in Table **2** indicate that lecturers demonstrate a moderate to high level of readiness to adopt inclusive teaching practices for students with intellectual disabilities in higher education. The overall cluster mean of 3.06 suggests general agreement across all measured items, reflecting a positive disposition and willingness among lecturers to engage in inclusive practices. Lecturers expressed strong agreement with statements such as the willingness to attend workshops on inclusive education (Mean = 3.19, SD = 1.05) and the availability of institutional resources to support inclusive teaching (Mean = 3.26, SD = 1.21). Similarly, they agreed that they are prepared to manage mixed-ability classrooms (Mean = 3.26) and are ready to develop personal strategies to support students with intellectual disabilities (Mean = 3.03).Although the means for confidence in using assistive technology (Mean = 2.73) and ability to adapt teaching strategies (Mean = 2.61) were lower than those for other items, they still fell within the "Agree" category, indicating room for growth in these areas. Interestingly, the item "I find it difficult to modify my teaching materials for inclusive needs" received the highest mean score (3.38), which, despite being an affirmative statement, reflects a challenge rather than readiness—indicating that while lecturers acknowledge the difficulty, they remain positively inclined overall. The data suggest that lecturers are generally ready to adopt inclusive teaching practices. They exhibit willingness, institutional awareness, and personal initiative, although targeted training and support—

Table 1: **Mean Rating of Prevailing Attitudes of Lecturers toward Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions**

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I believe students with intellectual disabilities can succeed in higher education.	270	3.34	0.84	Agree
2	Teaching students with intellectual disabilities is a rewarding experience.	270	2.57	1.2	Agree
3	I feel confident interacting with students with intellectual disabilities.	270	3.23	0.99	Agree
4	Including students with intellectual disabilities enriches the learning environment.	270	3.3	0.83	Agree
5	I worry that students with intellectual disabilities may slow down class progress.	270	2.65	1.23	Agree
6	I prefer not to have students with intellectual disabilities in my classes.	270	2.96	1.28	Agree
7	I believe students with intellectual disabilities deserve the same opportunities.	270	3.23	0.86	Agree
8	I would welcome more inclusive policies in my department.	270	3.34	0.89	Agree
	Cluster Mean	270	3.07	1.02	Agree

Key: N = Number of respondents; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 2: **Mean Rating of Lecturers to Adopt Inclusive Teaching Practices for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions**

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
9	I have received adequate training to teach students with intellectual disabilities.	270	3.04	0.95	Agree
10	I am willing to attend workshops on inclusive education practices.	270	3.19	1.05	Agree
11	I know how to adapt my teaching strategies for diverse learners.	270	2.61	0.75	Agree
12	My institution provides adequate resources for inclusive teaching.	270	3.26	1.21	Agree
13	I am ready to develop personal strategies for teaching students with intellectual disabilities.	270	3.03	1.14	Agree
14	I find it difficult to modify my teaching materials for inclusive needs.	270	3.38	0.89	Agree
15	I feel prepared to manage a mixed-ability classroom.	270	3.26	1.21	Agree
16	I am confident in using assistive technology to support students with disabilities.	270	2.73	1.18	Agree
	Cluster Mean	270	3.06	1.04	Agree

Key: N = Number of respondents; SD = Standard Deviation.

especially in areas such as strategy adaptation and assistive technology—may further enhance their readiness for inclusive education.

Hypotheses One

There is no statistically significant difference in lecturers' attitudes toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities based on gender.

The analysis presented in Table **3** indicates that there is no statistically significant overall difference in lecturers' attitudes toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities based on gender. Specifically, the mean attitude scores for male lecturers (Mean = 24.79) and female lecturers (Mean = 24.50) did not differ significantly, as reflected by a p-value of 0.268. However, a closer examination of individual attitude items revealed statistically significant gender differences in four areas. Female lecturers demonstrated significantly more positive attitudes than their male counterparts in beliefs about students' potential (Item 1, *p* = .001), the enrichment value of inclusion (Item 2, *p* = .001), emotional satisfaction derived from teaching (Item 5, *p* = .039), and concerns regarding class progress when including students with intellectual disabilities (Item 6, *p* = .001). No significant gender differences were observed in Items 3, 4, 7, and 8. Therefore, while the hypothesis of no gender-based difference in overall attitudes was retained, it was rejected at the item level, suggesting that gender plays a role in shaping specific components of lecturers' attitudes toward inclusive education.

Hypothesis Two

There is no statistically significant relationship between lecturers' attitudes and their level of readiness

Table 3:   Item-By-Item Analysis using Independent T-Test on Lecturers' Attitudes Toward Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities Based on Gender

Items	Respondents	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	Alpha	p-val	Decision
1	Male lecturers	162	3.0000	.96077	268	-2.474	0.05	.001	S
	Female lecturers	108	3.7500	.45227					
2	Male lecturers	162	2.6429	1.44686	268	.296	0.05	.001	S
	Female lecturers	108	2.5000	.90453					
3	Male lecturers	162	3.5000	.85485	268	1.534	0.05	.235	NS
	Female lecturers	108	2.9167	1.08362					
4	Male lecturers	162	3.7857	.57893	268	3.960	0.05	.123	NS
	Female lecturers	108	2.7500	.75378					
5	Male lecturers	162	2.5714	1.39859	268	-.362	0.05	.039	S
	Female lecturers	108	2.7500	1.05529					
6	Male lecturers	162	2.7857	1.47693	268	-.750	0.05	.001	S
	Female lecturers	108	3.1667	1.02986					
7	Male lecturers	162	3.2857	.91387	268	.344	0.05	.918	NS
	Female lecturers	108	3.1667	.83485					
8	Male lecturers	162	3.2143	.89258	268	-.809	0.05	.825	NS
	Female lecturers	108	3.5000	.90453					
	Male lecturers	162	24.7857	8.5234	268	0.217	0.05	0.268	NS
	Female lecturers	108	24.5001	7.0187					

Key:N represents the number of respondents; df stands for degrees of freedom; t-cal refers to the calculated t-value; p-val denotes the p-value; SD represents the standard deviation; S indicates a significant result, while NS signifies a result that is not significant.

to teach students with intellectual disabilities, as measured by teaching experience.

The data in Table **4** revealed no statistically significant difference between lecturers' attitudes and their level of readiness to teach students with intellectual disabilities, based on teaching experience. Lecturers with less than 10 years of experience had a mean readiness score of 24.64, while those with over 10 years had 24.47 (p = 0.443), indicating no significant difference in overall readiness. However, significant differences were found in two specific items: Item 14 (p = .020) and Item 15 (p = .002), where more experienced lecturers reported greater confidence in modifying teaching materials and managing mixed-ability classrooms. Despite these item-level differences, the hypothesis was not rejected, suggesting that teaching experience does not significantly influence lecturers' overall readiness for inclusive teaching.

DISCUSSION

What are the Prevailing Attitudes of Lecturers Toward Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions?

The findings of this study reveal that lecturers in Nigerian higher education institutions generally hold

positive attitudes toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities. This favorable disposition is reflected in their strong belief in the academic potential of such students, their recognition of the value that inclusive education brings to the learning environment, and their willingness to support and implement inclusive policies. Many lecturers expressed confidence in managing mixed-ability classrooms and demonstrated readiness to adopt personalized teaching strategies that promote inclusive learning. These responses suggest a moderate to high level of attitudinal preparedness toward inclusive education.

Despite this encouraging attitudinal outlook, significant practical challenges persist. The study also found that while lecturers are theoretically willing and motivated to engage in inclusive practices, many face difficulties in adapting conventional teaching materials to meet the diverse learning needs of their students. Other notable barriers include insufficient training in the use of assistive technologies and limited access to specialized instructional resources. These constraints highlight a gap between lecturers' positive disposition and their practical capacity to deliver inclusive education effectively within their institutional contexts.

These findings align with previous research by Braga *et al*., Ofori, and Boateng [5-7], whose studies

Table 4: **Item-By-Item Analysis using Independent T-Test on Lecturers' Attitude and Their Level of Readiness to Teach Students with Intellectual Disabilities Based on Years of Experience**

Items	Respondents	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	Alpha	p-val	Decision
9	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	175	3.6364	.92442	268	3.183	0.05	.824	NS
	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	95	2.6000	.73679					
10	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	175	3.3636	1.12006	268	.699	0.05	.797	NS
	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	95	3.0667	1.03280					
11	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	175	2.6364	.80904	268	.119	0.05	.976	NS
	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	95	2.6000	.73679					
12	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	175	3.1818	1.40130	268	-.308	0.05	.241	NS
	Lecturers Above 10 years of Teaching Experience	95	3.3333	1.11270					
13	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	175	2.9091	1.30035	268	-.484	0.05	.612	NS
	Lecturers Above 10 years of Teaching Experience	95	3.1333	1.06010					
14	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	175	2.9091	1.13618	268	-2.556	0.05	.020	S
	Lecturers Above 10 years of Teaching Experience	95	3.7333	.45774					
15	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	175	2.9091	1.51357	268	-1.309	0.05	.002	S
	Lecturers Above 10 years of Teaching Experience	95	3.5333	.91548					
16	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	175	3.0909	.94388	268	1.348	0.05	.069	NS
	Lecturers Above 10 years of Teaching Experience	95	2.4667	1.30201					
	Lecturers below 10 years of Teaching Experience	175	24.636	9.14881	268	0.087	0.05	0.443	NS
	Lecturers Above 10 years of Teaching Experience	95	24.467	7.35439					

Key: N represents the number of respondents; df stands for degrees of freedom; t-cal refers to the calculated t-value; p-val denotes the p-value; SD represents the standard deviation; S indicates a significant result, while NS signifies a result that is not significant.

across Brazil, Ghana, and the United States similarly reported that university lecturers often express strong support for inclusive education in principle, but are hindered by systemic obstacles. Such obstacles include inadequate institutional support structures, a lack of formal training programs, and insufficient access to inclusive pedagogical tools. This convergence of evidence reflects a broader, global challenge in moving inclusive education from policy rhetoric to practical implementation.

Furthermore, De *et al*. [6] emphasize the critical importance of institutional-level interventions in promoting inclusive readiness. Their research, conducted within European universities participating in

the Erasmus program, found that exposure to international best practices, supportive policy environments, and sustained faculty development initiatives significantly improved lecturers' capacity to implement inclusive education. This highlights the crucial role of organizational leadership and structural support in enabling educators to translate inclusive intentions into practical pedagogical actions.

This study highlights a generally positive disposition among Nigerian lecturers toward inclusive education for students with intellectual disabilities. It also highlights persistent structural and logistical barriers that hinder full implementation. The consistency of these findings with global trends suggests that

sustainable, inclusive education requires more than individual commitment. It necessitates strategic investment in faculty training, the strengthening of inclusive education policies, and the provision of adequate technological and instructional support systems. Without addressing these institutional challenges, efforts toward inclusive education may remain aspirational rather than transformative.

How Ready are Lecturers to Adopt Inclusive Teaching Practices for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions?

The findings of this study reveal that lecturers in Nigerian higher education institutions generally exhibit favorable attitudes toward the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities. Many respondents articulated strong beliefs in the academic potential of these students, endorsed inclusive education policies, and affirmed the imperative of providing equitable learning opportunities. This overall positive disposition reflects a broader paradigm shift toward recognizing inclusive education not merely as a policy directive, but as both a pedagogical necessity and a moral responsibility. Lecturers demonstrated a conceptual embrace of inclusion by indicating confidence in their ability to communicate with and support students with intellectual disabilities, as well as a willingness to engage in department-wide efforts to foster inclusivity.

Despite this overarching trend of support, the study also surfaced nuanced reservations that moderate the optimism observed in lecturers' responses. A significant subset of participants conveyed feelings of dissatisfaction or limited fulfillment when teaching students with intellectual disabilities. Some expressed apprehension that these students might hinder the pace or dynamics of classroom activities, and a few even admitted to feeling reluctant to include such students in their courses. These ambivalent attitudes point to an underlying tension: while inclusive values are increasingly internalized at the ideological level, practical implementation in everyday instructional settings remains fraught with discomfort and uncertainty.

These patterns resonate with the findings of Lannan et al. [17], who similarly observed that although faculty members often espouse inclusive values, their capacity to translate these values into effective teaching practices is constrained by insufficient institutional backing, inadequate specialized training, and limited access to inclusive pedagogical resources. Likewise,

De [6] underscores the importance of structural support and institutional context. Their research within European universities highlighted that participation in programs such as Erasmus, where inclusive teaching practices are deliberately embedded in professional development and collaborative learning frameworks, significantly enhances both faculty attitudes and competencies. These comparative insights stress a critical point: attitudinal willingness, while necessary, is insufficient on its own. Real progress toward inclusive education demands systemic interventions that bridge the gap between ideology and implementation.

This study's findings are firmly grounded in and supportive of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that behavior is driven by three interconnected constructs: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [1]. Lecturers' demonstrated readiness to adopt inclusive teaching strategies—evident in their openness to attending workshops, engaging with inclusive pedagogy, and developing individual classroom techniques—reflects a positive attitude, a central component of the Theory of Planned Behavior. Furthermore, institutional initiatives such as inclusive policy frameworks and public endorsements of inclusive values act as subjective norms that validate and reinforce the intent to implement inclusive practices. However, the study also highlights persistent barriers in perceived behavioral control. Despite positive intentions, many lecturers cited challenges in modifying instructional materials, managing diverse classroom needs, and effectively integrating assistive technologies. These perceived limitations reduce confidence in their ability to enact inclusive practices, thereby hindering the translation of intention into tangible behavior. In line with TPB, this discrepancy highlights how perceived constraints—whether technical, pedagogical, or infrastructural—can significantly diminish the impact of otherwise strong behavioral intentions.

Additionally, while lecturers widely support the principles of inclusive education, latent concerns about the logistical and emotional demands of teaching students with intellectual disabilities indicate a lack of complete confidence in their competence to execute these practices effectively. Such reservations reflect internalized doubts about preparedness—an essential element within the TPB framework's concept of perceived behavioral control. This suggests that unless

institutions proactively invest in skill-building, continuous training, and accessible instructional technologies, inclusive teaching will remain more of a conceptual aspiration than an operational reality.

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive perspective on both the psychological and systemic factors that influence lecturers' readiness to adopt inclusive teaching practices within Nigerian higher education. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, the research highlights that although positive attitudes and supportive subjective norms are present, actual implementation is hindered by lecturers' perceived lack of control and limited resources. The implications are far-reaching: to actualize the promise of inclusive education, institutions must prioritize policy alignment, sustained professional development, and tangible support mechanisms. These steps are essential for empowering faculty, ensuring effective inclusion, and advancing Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve lecturers' attitudes and enhance their readiness for inclusive teaching practices in higher education institutions:

1. Enhance Inclusive Education Training for Lecturers: Higher education institutions should organize regular workshops and capacity-building programs to equip lecturers with practical skills in inclusive teaching strategies, such as differentiated instruction, the use of assistive technology, and managing mixed-ability classrooms.

2. Develop and Enforce Institutional Inclusion Policies: Universities should formulate and implement comprehensive policies that support the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities. These policies should outline clear roles, expectations, and support mechanisms for lecturers.

3. Improve Access to Inclusive Teaching Resources: Institutions must invest in assistive technologies, instructional materials, and infrastructural adjustments that facilitate effective inclusive teaching practices for lecturers and support learning for students with intellectual disabilities.

4. Promote Attitudinal Change Through Sensitization Campaigns: To address underlying reservations and misconceptions, universities should implement awareness programs aimed at fostering positive attitudes and increasing lecturers' commitment to inclusive education values.

STUDY LIMITATION

This study was limited to lecturers from federal universities within Nigeria's South-East geopolitical zone. Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to other regions or institutional types such as state-owned or private universities. Additionally, the study relied exclusively on self-reported data collected through structured questionnaires. Such data are inherently susceptible to social desirability and sociocultural response biases, where participants may consciously or unconsciously provide responses that align with perceived social expectations or norms, rather than reflect their actual beliefs or practices. This tendency may have led to an overrepresentation of positive attitudes and readiness for inclusive education.These limitations restrict the extent to which the findings can be interpreted as reflective of national trends or real-world instructional behaviors. To enhance future investigations, researchers are encouraged to broaden the geographical scope and adopt mixed-method approaches—incorporating qualitative techniques such as interviews, focus group discussions, or classroom observations. These strategies would help uncover more profound insights and provide a more contextually grounded and nuanced understanding of lecturers' attitudes and readiness for inclusive teaching practices.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ID	=	Intellectual Disabilities
HEIs	=	Higher Education Institutions
SDG	=	Sustainable Development Goals
SPSS	=	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNESCO	=	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNCRPD	=	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

IEP   = Individualised Education Programme

SEN   = Special Educational Needs

CBT   = Computer-Based Test

NUC   = National Universities Commission

NGO   = Non-Governmental Organisation

PWDs   = Persons with Disabilities

TPB   = Theory of Planned Behavior

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest among the authors of this article.

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