Students Interest in Research and Tendency to Acquire Research Skills among Postgraduate Students with Learning Disabilities (LD) in Two Public Universities of Cross River State, Nigeria: Implications for Psychology

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Abstract: *Background*: Learning disability is a permanent condition caused by abnormalities in the growth and development of the human brain, which has enormous implications for an individual's general performance.

Aim: This study investigated how students' interest in research predicted the tendency to acquire research skills among postgraduate students with Learning Disabilities (LD) in two Public Universities of Cross River State, Nigeria: Implications for Psychology. One objective, one purpose, and one statement of hypothesis were formulated. A literature review was carried out.

Method: The survey research design was utilized. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted, and 49 respondents were sampled. A 16-item four-point modified Likert scale questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The face and content validity of the instrument were established. The reliability estimates are 0.84 using the Cronbach Alpha method. A simple linear regression statistical tool was used to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results: The results revealed that interest significantly predicts postgraduate students with learning disabilities' tendency to acquire research skills. Hence, the more interested students with learning disabilities are in research, the more likely they are to develop strong research skills. Research skills are crucial for postgraduate studies, particularly for thesis writing, dissertation projects, and contributing to academic knowledge. By fostering research interest, universities can enhance the overall academic success of their postgraduate students.

Conclusion: Interest in research significantly predicts postgraduate students' tendency to acquire research skills in the research area. Given the significant role of knowledge in humanity, acquiring research skills is integral to man. Graduate schools should have internal seminars and workshops, making it mandatory for students to present standard papers.

Keywords: Interest, learning disabilities, research skills, psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Learning disability is a permanent condition of abnormality in the growth and development of the human brain, which has enormous implications on an individual's general performance [1]. The most challenging category of unusual conditions to address has been learning disabilities. The disability of the individual also impacts the family and society at large with the condition. When the intellectual functioning of a child with learning disabilities is compared to that of a regularly developing child of the same age, it becomes evident that truly there is a big gap, and it becomes a big problem for the parents whose child has an intellectual disability and even all members of the family are affected [2,3]. This impairment, which was once known as "mental retardation," has been

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described as a major cognitive loss that has been verified by an Intelligent Quotient (IQ) test. Children with this problem are born into wealthy, impoverished, literate, and illiterate homes, demonstrating how prevalent it is across all socioeconomic classes.

Studies conducted in Calabar City in Cross River State, Nigeria, have shown a correlation between the prevalence of intellectual disability and risk factors like brain injury, malnutrition, low birth weight, preterm birth, high birth order, sex, maternal age over 30, multiple pregnancies, low birth weight, iron and iodine deficiencies, and low socioeconomic status, as well as indirect factors like low parental schooling and mother depression. Studies have indicated a sharp rise in the population of Nigerians with intellectual disabilities, pointing out that several factors, including advancements in screening and diagnosis, a lack of knowledge about causes and preventive measures, genetic factors, accidents involving mothers and children, brain injuries, maternal smoking, and alcohol consumption during pregnancy, malnutrition in children, a lack of stimulating environments, infections in mothers and children, premature birth, and many others, could be blamed for the significant rise in the rate of intellectual disability.

Genetic and/or neurobiological variables that alter brain physiology can affect one or more learning-related cognitive processes, which are the causes of learning impairments. Learning basic skills like reading, writing, and/or mathematics may be challenging due to these processing problems. Higher-level cognitive functions like abstract reasoning, long- or short-term memory, concentration, and planning may also be hampered by them [6]. It is critical to realize that learning challenges may affect a person's relationships with friends, family, coworkers, and their life outside of the classroom. Since difficulties in reading, writing, and/or mathematics are visible problems, learning impairments are usually identified during the school years. However, some children with learning and intellectual challenges are not assessed until they're adults and enrolled in postsecondary education. Some individuals with learning disabilities may never have an assessment and go through life without knowing why they have difficulties at work, in the classroom, or social situations with friends and family [7].

Only 8% to 38% of children with learning disabilities, including those enrolled in secondary and higher institutions, seek assistance for a clinically psychologically severe health problem, according to research [6,7]. Several factors are involved in predicting the psychological well-being of school students. Parental pressure, academic stress, and other significant factors are linked to the prediction of psychological health, particularly in children with learning disabilities.

Variables including sex, the mother's age, the academic interests of the students, and the educational and socioeconomic standing of the parents are other factors that influence the occurrence of learning disabilities. McKenzie K *et al*. [5] underlined that variations or shifts in demographic traits, such as the average age and socioeconomic position of parents, may impact the occurrence and prevalence of learning disabilities. The rise in the number of children with intellectual disabilities is concerning when one considers the difficulties that families of these children usually face in a developing nation such as Nigeria, and more especially in the city of Calabar.

Every aspect of life, including health care, education, the environment, and medicine, requires research skills [8]. Research skills encompass concrete concepts that are easier to teach, such as the scientific method and well-designed studies. Research indicates that when we are clearly informed that we will be learning something, we are more likely to identify that we have learned it [9]. Additionally, since students may express their skills to potential employers when searching for employment, it may be beneficial for their employers to help them become more conscious of their own skill sets. Teachers may have spent decades using research as their main occupation in an academic context. On the other hand, the student's main task is to acquire and comprehend knowledge. So that students understand what they are studying and why, we may need to be more explicit about research skills and explain their influence on employment within our curricula.

Considering the value of knowledge to humanity, the capacity for knowledge creation may be one of the most extraordinary human qualities. This highlights the importance of possessing these abilities to pursue postsecondary education. As a result, one of the primary duties of education, especially higher education, is to guarantee such purchases among graduates, especially postgraduate students.

Learning disabilities often affect areas like reading comprehension, working memory, and organization, which are critical for conducting research. For instance,

students with dyslexia may struggle with reading and interpreting complex texts, which can hinder their ability to engage with research literature effectively. In many Nigerian tertiary institutions, including those in Cross River State, there is often a lack of specialized support services tailored for students with learning disabilities. This includes limited access to academic support, specialized training, and assistive technologies that could help students with learning disabilities overcome challenges in research.

The absence of such accommodations can significantly hinder their ability to develop research skills [10]. There is often low awareness of learning disabilities in Nigeria, including within educational institutions. Many students with learning disabilities may not be properly diagnosed or identified early. This lack of identification leads to inadequate intervention and support for students, making it more difficult for them to acquire essential research skills [11].

Lecturers and academic staff in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are often not equipped with the necessary training to address the needs of students with learning disabilities. Without proper understanding and pedagogical strategies, instructors may fail to provide the accommodations these students need to engage in research activities effectively [12]. Nigerian tertiary institutions, particularly in states like Cross River, often face resource constraints. These include limited access to assistive technologies, specialized libraries, and adapted learning environments, essential for students with learning disabilities to succeed in research. Financial and infrastructural limitations within the educational system exacerbate these challenges [13].

In some parts of Nigeria, learning disabilities are misunderstood or stigmatized. Students with learning disabilities may experience social and cultural stigma, which can affect their confidence and willingness to engage in academic activities, including research. The fear of being labeled or discriminated against may lead to reduced participation in research, which requires independence and self-confidence [14]. Research requires access to various academic resources, including journals, textbooks, and digital content. In Cross River State, students with learning disabilities may struggle to find adapted or accessible learning materials, further impeding their ability to develop research skills [15].

Research articles [5, 6] have suggested, however, that a variety of factors, including instability in postsecondary institutions, a lack of research facilities, supervisors' compromise in research supervision, students' lack of research skills, and incompetence in research methodology course lecturers, are to be blamed for students' inability to learn research skills in universities. Multi-level, cross-level, and psychological-social elements have been found to contribute to the development of research skills from an ecological perspective. Age, gender, peer group, academic interests, attitude, self-concept, anxiety, motivation, marital status, and economic situation are some of these variables. Any one of these elements might be present in their lives. Anxiety and self-concept were examined to establish where these variables should be included for the objectives of this investigation. There are simple explanations for this.

Interest is a feeling that is unintentionally aroused by anything in the immediate environment. This can only transiently affect an individual's consciousness and ideals. The expense of the materials and background, as well as some instructor supervision, all serve to pique students' interests in the case. Several studies showed that students' enthusiasm for learning research techniques correlated positively with such skills. Deans and department heads have often expressed dissatisfaction, claiming that students fail to show a research interest. These might be caused by several circumstances and so forth.

Adequate support services, e.g., mentors, counselors, and specialist academic advisers qualified to work with students with learning disabilities, are, for example, lacking in many colleges. Once again, it may not be possible for students with learning disabilities to interact with research materials and tools in an accessible manner. It's possible that research environments, both digital and physical, cannot be modified to suit students with learning disabilities. Stereotypes in academia and society regarding the ability of individuals with learning disabilities might result in discouragement and low expectations. Students who have encountered prejudice and marginalization may get discouraged from doing research. The universities may not provide specialized courses that would teach individuals with learning disabilities how to do research and other skills.

The instance of Postgraduate Students (PGS) at the University of Calabar [16] implies that research abilities may be taught and gained, but they also had to provide sophisticated research methodologies and statistics. It should be mentioned that academic staff still finds it

difficult to create these courses in a way that encourages students to acquire these abilities and attitudes. The government and university administration have worked hard to address this problem by encouraging and facilitating scholarship and community service and ensuring that postgraduate students acquire the academic and professional skills necessary to become independent and contributing members of society.

Among these initiatives are the advanced research techniques and statistics classes that students must take during their first year of coursework, the addition of a course on information, communication, and technology (ICT) use, the availability of graduate school e-libraries, and so on. Despite these efforts, the objective of upholding academic standards at the university remains unfulfilled. It's crucial to remember that students continue to live unsatisfied lives without the abilities necessary to realize their lifelong goals.

As an individual, family, community, and country, I find this situation unacceptable. Given that the importance of research today cannot be overemphasized in the growth and development of any nation, the researcher wonders whether students' interest in research has a relationship with research skills acquisition among Post Graduate Students in two public universities of Cross River State, Nigeria: Implications for psychology.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to examine the relationship between students' interest in research and the tendency to acquire research skills among postgraduate students with Learning Disabilities (LD) in two public universities of Cross River State, Nigeria: Implications for psychology.

Research Question

What is the relationship between students' interest in research and their tendency to acquire research skills?

Statement of Hypothesis

The hypothesis states no significant relationship exists between students' interest in research and their tendency to acquire research skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research interests include the most efficient use of psychomotor traits like self-control, as well as a highly potent affective psychological trait, a powerful knowledge emotion, an overwhelming magnetic positive feeling, and a sense of being captivated, enthusiastic, vigorous, and energized to process information much faster and more accurately in a cognitive manner.

One's interests, both in kind and scope, could be a crucial aspect of one's personality [17]. The value may greatly impact how much enjoyment one gets out of certain jobs and other important stages of daily life. Values are often examined in conjunction with desires and expectations, significantly correlating with individual decisions. From the student's perspective, considering his areas of interest and his intended academic goals may be important from a practical standpoint. He will be motivated to work on his thesis and advance his scientific knowledge.

A student's ability to learn research skills effectively depends on how much interest he has in the subject, how well he understands it, and—most importantly—how he puts all that enthusiasm into practice. Most of the time, studying and reading are prerequisites for developing such abilities. The desire to acquire may, in part, stem from an individual's interest in conducting the study. The motivation behind one's desire to examine research materials is a personal choice.

Interest cognitively engages pupils and statistically supports learning and skill acquisition, according to previous research [18]. The significance might be seen as an existing psychological state of engagement and a tendency to interact with specific concepts, occasions, or items over an extended period [18]. A person's interest both broadens and narrows their experiences, causing them to focus their attention on specific items while ignoring other things that may otherwise draw their attention. The contemporary, the edgy, and the unusual are driven by interest. The desire to approach or participate in some events falls into the category of interest, as does the desire to stay away from certain events.

Adekunle D and Femi-Adeoye P [19] conducted an empirical study at public universities in Ekiti State to examine how students' attitudes and interests connect to their ability to acquire research skills. Four postsecondary institutions in Ekiti State provided a random sample of 200 final-year students for the study. A descriptive research survey was used as the study design. A questionnaire was one of the tools utilized to collect pertinent data from the pupils. The validity and

reliability methods were applied to the instrument. The two null hypotheses developed for the investigation were statistically analyzed using Pearson Product Moment correlation(r). Results indicated a substantial correlation between students' attitudes about learning research skills and their desire to develop such skills. This research work is related to the present study because it delves into students' ability to acquire research skills, which is the dependent variable of this study. Although the study is on attitude and interest, the present study is only interested in research skills; hence, it is related.

In two public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, postgraduate students with learning disabilities (LD) were shown to be more likely to develop research skills when their self-concept and anxiety were predicted. According to a study by Amalu M *et al*. [20], this finding has implications for counseling. The study's two objectives were outlined to direct the investigation and fulfill its goal. Two hypothesis statements were developed from the two study questions. A literature review was done based on the factors being studied. It was decided that the survey research design would work best for this investigation. The 49 respondents recruited for the study were chosen using a stratified random sampling approach. The tool used to gather data was a validated 20-item, four-point modified Likert scale questionnaire. Test and measurement professionals validated the instrument's face and content validity. The instruments' reliability estimates of 0.81 were determined using the Cronbach Alpha technique. The study employed a basic statistical method called linear regression to assess the hypotheses that were developed. Testing of the hypotheses was done at the significance level of 0.05. The data analysis results showed that anxiety and self-concept significantly predicted postgraduate students with learning disabilities (LD) propensity to develop research abilities in the field of study. The results of the study led to several recommendations, including the need for graduate schools to hold internal seminars and workshops every quarter of the year wherein each postgraduate student presents a standard paper. As a result, there will be an increase in research publications, skills sharing, and the desire to apply information. This study is also related to the present study because it discusses students' interest in research skills as its dependent variable. In terms of methodology, it utilizes methodologies similar to those used in the present study. It uses a four-point modified Likert scale questionnaire, simple linear regression, and the Cronbach Alpha reliability method for checking the reliability coefficient of the instrument.

A related study by Atanga C *et al*. [21] investigated Teachers of Students with Learning Disabilities: Assistive Technology Knowledge, Perceptions, Interests, and Barriers. A survey was administered to teachers of students with LD at the elementary and middle school levels. Assistive technology (AT) helps bridge the gap between students with learning disabilities (LD) and their peers without LD. However, this implies a need for teachers to become well-trained and proficient in the use of AT. There are established AT competencies for educators, and AT service professionals must be knowledgeable about AT to select and recommend specific technology to individual education program teams. Professionals should also be well-versed with AT to be able to train students in its use. There is a significant need for research on teachers' knowledge and perceptions of AT (i.e., interest in using it and barriers to incorporating it) as well as the best ways to provide AT training. The results indicated that completing an AT course in college along with self-reported AT proficiency in iPad reading apps were associated with higher ratings of AT knowledge.

Additionally, higher AT proficiency ratings and completion of AT college coursework were associated with perceptions of college preparation for AT, but these factors did not predict perceptions of workplace preparation. Teachers were clearly interested in utilizing AT but felt their college did not adequately prepare them for AT, and funding issues were the most common barriers to implementing AT. The findings suggest a need for an emphasis on AT training in college courses. This study is related to this present research work because it is on students with learning disabilities, which forms the dependent variable of the present study. Again, the study used interest as one of the intervening variables in the research, which formed the independent variable in this study.

Another study by Afolabi OE *et al*. [22] investigated the research competence of postgraduate students in library schools in Southwest Nigeria. The peculiarity of this study is that research competence was subdivided into three (3) different areas comprising research knowledge, research skills, and research attitude. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study covered one hundred and sixty-one (161) library and information science postgraduate students in southwest Nigeria, and a total enumeration

technique was adopted for this study to cover the total population size. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for collecting data from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using a frequency distribution table and percentage. The study found that the level of research competence possessed by postgraduate students in library schools in Southwest Nigeria is high. Also, results from the study showed that research skills have the highest mean value and standard deviation ($\bar{x}$ =41.15; std dev. = 12.863), followed by research knowledge ($\bar{x}$ =39.34; std dev. = 11.641) and lastly research attitude ($\bar{x}$ =32.59; std dev. = 10.785). The study also found out that the research competence possessed by the postgraduate students in library schools in southwest Nigeria includes the ability to define a research problem, knowing how to formulate research questions/hypotheses, they know how to develop a conceptual model for my study, they know how to explain the significance of the study, they know how to formulate research objectives, etc. The study concluded that postgraduates need to have a positive attitude toward research. Also, lecturers are advised to develop new methods of teaching research method. This literature is related to this study because the study is on the research competence of postgraduate students, which is part of the focus of this research work. Again, the population of the study is postgraduate students, which is the same as the present study, hence the relationship to the present work.

Al Furaikh S *et al*. [23] conducted a study on a cross-sectional survey on nursing students' interest in research. The study aims to analyze undergraduate nursing students' interests in research components to discover implications for the best practices in the teaching/learning process. A descriptive, cross-sectional investigation was carried out with purposively selected 186 level 5-8 students at the College of Nursing, King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, Al-Has, from 2016-2017. Data on students' interest in research were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The overall attitude towards research was positive. This literature is very related to this research work because it captures students' interest in research, which is the main focus of this work. The result revealed that nursing students' interest in research is positive.

Muthuswamy P *et al*. [24] studied interest in research among doctoral students at VIT University, Tamilnadu, India. The study's main aim was to assess the interest in research among doctoral students and find the various dimensions of interest. The study revealed that research interest has multiple dimensions, and comprehending the students' interest in research would bridge the gap between the research supervisor and his ward. Assessing the interest and diagnosing the areas that need to be addressed is the need of the hour to find solutions to various problems of doctoral students. Acquiring sufficient knowledge to carry forward the research is a key aspect of the research progress. The methodology used for this research is a self-developed questionnaire to assess interest in the research. 159 doctoral students were sampled for the study. The factor analysis yielded 6 factors of interest towards research: love for research, research fear, research usefulness, difficulties in research, importance of research, and benefits of research. The study is related to this work because it deals with interest in research among doctoral students, and research interest is the core independent variable of this study. Also, the study is related to this work because it is a questionnaire for data collection, which is the same as the present study.

Ali CA and Akayuure P [25] conducted research on exploring postgraduate students' research knowledge and skills in normality tests and verifications. The study explored the research knowledge and skills of postgraduate students in testing and verifying the normality of data in order to boost their confidence and credibility of educational research findings. This exploratory survey randomly sampled 66 postgraduate students out of about 150 postgraduate students in five faculties of the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. The study variables were graduate students' knowledge of types of statistics, measurement scales, data forms, and instruments of data collection. The others were their understanding of confidence levels and numerical, theoretical, and graphical tests. The rest were their challenges in presentation, interpretation, labeling, computation, and discussion of research results. The results revealed that postgraduate students require these innovative skills to test and verify their educational research data. The researchers observed that postgraduate students have difficulties exploring and reporting normality tests and verifications to their research data. This literature is also related to the present study because it is solely on exploring postgraduate students' research knowledge and skills. Research skills acquisition is the dependent variable of this study.

Ugwu AN *et al*. [26] studied the research competence needs of postgraduate students in

science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education in research writing at Nigerian universities. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study, and a total of 372 respondents comprising 222 masters and 150 PhD students of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in nine universities in south-eastern Nigeria. The findings of this study reveal that although it is the wish of postgraduate students to carry out research writing with ease, postgraduate students at Nigerian Universities show that they are deficient in most research writing competencies. The study reveals that the postgraduate students have the knowledge of research writing but lack the skills needed to carry it out effectively.

Van der Westhuizen, S [27] studied postgraduate students' research interests, their research self-efficacy, and their knowledge of research in a distance-learning education institution in South Africa. This study aimed to determine the degree to which an online module influenced postgraduate students' interests in research, their research self-efficacy, and their knowledge of research. A total of 279 postgraduate students were enrolled in an online course in research methodology (n = 97 for semester 1 in 2012 and n = 182 for semester 2 in 2012) at a distance education institution in South Africa. The interests towards research scale, self-developed research self-efficacy, and knowledge test were administered in a single group pretest test-posttest design. Dependent t-tests revealed that, in general, students' interest in research, their research self-efficacy, and their knowledge of research increased from the onset to the completion of the module. However, students' perceptions of the usefulness of research for their careers declined, and their research anxiety and self-efficacy about data analysis remained unchanged upon completion of the module. These findings indicate that addressing students' perceptions of the usefulness of research for their careers and their research anxiety may be more complex than anticipated. It could be a process independent of addressing students' research self-efficacy and knowledge of research. This research work is also related to this study because it is on postgraduate students' interests in research.

A recent study on a descriptive analysis of Facebook and WhatsApp as predictors of study habits among SSII students with disabilities in Public Secondary Schools of Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria: Implications for inclusive education by Odey SE *et al*. [28] was examined. Study objectives were stated to guide the study and achieve its goals. Two research questions were formulated. A literature review was carried out based on the variables under study, as research gaps were also stated. The study utilized the descriptive survey research design. The population of Senior Secondary School II (SSII) students with disabilities in Calabar Metropolis comprises 3,814 from 24 public Secondary Schools. The study used a stratified random sampling technique. Out of 3,814 respondents, 763 respondents were sampled for the study. A validated 15-item four-point modified Likert scale questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The face and content validity of the instrument was established by experts in Test and Measurement from the University of Calabar, Calabar-Nigeria. The reliability estimates of 0.82 for the instruments were established using the Cronbach Alpha method. A descriptive analysis of frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation was used to test the research questions posed for the study. The results obtained from the data analysis revealed there is a high extent of the impact of Facebook on study habits among SSII students with disabilities, and there is also a high extent of the impact of WhatsApp on study habits among SSII students with disabilities in Public Secondary Schools of Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. Based on the study's findings, it was concluded that Facebook and WhatsApp utilization significantly impact study habits among SSII students with disabilities in Public Secondary Schools in the study area. This study is related to this work because it is on students with disabilities, which is the population of the present study, and the instrument for data collection is a questionnaire, the same as the present study.

Recently, a related study by Amalu M *et al*. [29] evaluated the factors that affected how teachers with intellectual disabilities implemented the social studies curriculum in a sample of schools in the Cross River State, Nigeria, Calabar South Local Government Area; implications for psychology. Two survey factors have been developed to guide the study. The variables under review were used to guide the literature review. The survey study's template was employed. Purposeful selection approaches were used to choose the 60 respondents that made up the study's sample. A structured questionnaire with 10 items and a four-point Likert scale was used to collect the results. Using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method, the instrument's approximate correlation was 0.78. The data was examined using a descriptive methodology. The findings of the study indicated that a teacher's teaching

style and level of training among teachers with intellectual disabilities had an impact on how they instruct students in social studies. It was suggested that secondary school teachers with disabilities be given the opportunity to participate in curriculum development and implementation so that they can use student-centered methods in teaching.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Experimental Setting

The research design for the study was survey-research design. Following Salant P and Dillman DA [30], a research design is employed when the objective of a survey is to collect and assess data on the phenomenon under investigation from a representative of the total population in the hopes of extrapolating the results to the entire population.

Participants/Sample

The study's population consists of 123 postgraduate students with various learning disabilities who are 20 years of age or older and attend the Universities of Calabar and Cross River. A stratified random sampling strategy was employed in the investigation. Both universities were placed in strata, and for each university, the population of postgraduate students with learning disabilities was placed in strata from where respondents were selected. Only forty percent (40%) of all students from each university who have learning difficulties (LD) were included in the research. The study's sample consisted of 49 respondents out of 123 respondents. The instrument used to collect the data was the "Students Interest and Postgraduate Students with Learning Disabilities (LD) Tendency to Acquire Research Skills Questionnaire" (SIAPSLDTARSQ). This instrument was developed from the literature review. The instrument consists of three sections: Sections A, B, and C. Section A consists of the respondents' demographic variables, which include gender, age, marital status, and income level. Section B consists of ten items measuring the independent variable-Students interest. These items were measured on a four-point modified Likert scale of Strongly agreed, Agreed, Disagreed, and strongly disagreed. Section C of the instrument measures the dependent variable-tendency to acquire research skills, and it is also measured on a four-point modified Likert scale of Strongly agreed, Agreed, Disagreed, and strongly disagreed. The instrument was subject to face validity by experts in testing and measurement at the University of Calabar. After the validation, three items were modified, two were dropped, and two were added to the instrument. The instrument was also subjected to a test of reliability using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The result indicated a reliability result of 0.82. This result suggests that the instrument measures what it intends to measure. Hence, approval was given for the instrument to be used for data collection.

In terms of data collection, the researcher visited the public universities in the study area and sought permission to carry out the study. The validated questionnaire was administered by the researcher and two research assistants. Each item in the questionnaire addressed a specific objective. The questionnaire was carefully formulated to avoid confusing the respondents. During data collection, verbal informed consent was sought from respondents, stating clearly the confidentiality of their responses and protection, including their voluntary participation in the study and freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. The research assistants were trained on how to use questionnaires to gather important information by carefully explaining the meaning of each item in local dialect to the respondents.

After collecting the questionnaire, codes/scores were assigned to each item. For ease of data preparation, a coding schedule was prepared by developing a key for each of the constructs in the instrument in a tabular form. The positively worded items were assigned numbers in increasing order of Strongly Agree - 4 points, agree – 3 points, Disagree – 2 points, and Strongly Disagree – 1 point, while the negative items were in decreasing order of Strongly Agree – 1 point, Agree – 2 points, Disagree – 3 Points and Strongly Disagree – 4 points.

The raw scores of all the items were summed together to show the result for each variable to analyze the data. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 23. Results were presented in tables and inferential statistics, as the research hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 significance level (95% confidence interval).

Study Group Definition (SGD)

- The study group comprises postgraduate students from Cross River State, Nigeria public universities.
- The age range is between 20-65 years
- There are both males and females in the group

- All the students already have first degrees and are now pursuing postgraduate programs such as Postgraduate Diplomas, Master's degrees, Ph.D. degrees, and Postdoctoral degrees.

- All the students selected for the study are characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning (e.g., reasoning, learning, problem-solving) and adaptive behavior (conceptual, social, and practical skills).

- Participants' intellectual disabilities were diagnosed using standardized tests like the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, and for some, the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales were used along with assessments of adaptive behaviors.

- Participants were categorized based on the severity of their intellectual disability (mild, moderate, severe).

- In terms of cognitive abilities, the participants have general cognitive strengths and challenges, such as attention span, memory, and problem-solving skills.

Statistical Analysis

The questionnaire has three sections: A, B, and C. Four questions in Section A concentrated on the demographic information of the respondents, including age and gender. Research interest is the study's sub-independent variable, which is the focus of Section B's ten items. The study's dependent variable is the tendency to acquire research skills, which is the subject of Section C's ten items. There were twenty-four items for the instrument.

The option best suited to each respondent's situation was checked. Respondents were asked to rate each item on a modified Likert scale with four points: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. These items originated from the literature examined throughout the investigation.

The raw scores of all the items in each variable were summed together to reveal the outcome for each variable to analyze the data.

Ethical Consideration

In order to safeguard the participants' psychological, physical, and emotional well-being, the study adhered fully to social science research ethical norms and principles, guaranteeing the privacy, secrecy, and confidentiality of their data. The participants gave their informed permission for the study by being made aware of its goal, which may have affected their decision to take part. The researcher advised the participants that their information would be kept private. Furthermore, the investigator made certain that the participants in the study gave their informed consent and did so voluntarily.

Participants were given a comprehensive explanation of the study, including:

- The purpose of the research.
- The expected duration of their involvement.
- The nature of the data being collected.
- Potential risks, benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation.
- Participation was strictly voluntary, with no coercion or undue influence.
- Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions.
- The consent forms were written in clear, non-technical language to ensure accessibility and understanding.
- For participants requiring further clarification, dedicated sessions were arranged to address their concerns.
- All personal identifiers (e.g., names, student IDs, email addresses) were removed from the data.
- Participants were assigned unique codes to track their responses, ensuring that individual identities were not linked to the data.
- Only the principal investigator and authorized team members had access to raw data.
- When sharing results, data was aggregated to prevent the identification of individual participants.
- The study protocol, including consent and confidentiality measures, was reviewed and approved by the institution's Ethics Review Committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards.

- After completing their participation, students were debriefed about the study's outcomes and offered the opportunity to ask questions.

- At the study's conclusion, all identifiable data will be securely destroyed per institutional guidelines.

Implications for Diagnosis

According to Losh L [16], the following are the implications for diagnosing students with learning disabilities.

1. Accurate Assessment: The varied teaching methods employed in curriculum implementation allow for a more comprehensive assessment of students' cognitive and adaptive functioning, which can lead to more accurate and nuanced diagnoses.

2. Individualized Plans: Effective curriculum implementation facilitates the development of individualized education plans (IEPs) for students. These IEPs offer a valuable resource for diagnosticians by providing insights into students' learning profiles, needs, and progress.

3. Early Identification: Effective curriculum implementation is instrumental in identifying learning disabilities at an early stage. Diverse teaching methods can reveal variations in learning abilities and difficulties, prompting timely assessments.

4. Informed Collaboration: Collaboration between teachers, special education professionals, and diagnosticians is encouraged by effective curriculum implementation. This interdisciplinary approach can result in a more comprehensive and accurate diagnosis.

Implications for Treatment

Again, according to [16], the following implications for treatment were stated;

1. Tailored Interventions: The significant impact of teaching methods on curriculum implementation underscores the need for tailored interventions for individuals with intellectual disabilities. These interventions should consider the specific learning preferences and needs of each student.

2. Progress Monitoring: Curriculum implementation allows for ongoing progress monitoring. This capability to assess the impact of different teaching methods on students' progress is crucial for the treatment of intellectual disabilities.

3. Holistic Approach: Effective curriculum implementation is part of a holistic approach to treating intellectual disabilities. It recognizes that academic development is intertwined with social and emotional growth. Treatment approaches should address all these aspects.

4. Parent and Caregiver Involvement: Recommendations for more engaging teaching methods may involve parents and caregivers in the treatment process. They can participate in supporting and reinforcing learning strategies at home, contributing to the overall effectiveness of treatment.

RESULTS

There is no significant relationship between students' interest in research and the tendency to acquire research skills among postgraduate students with Learning Disabilities (LD). The student's interest in research is the independent variable in this hypothesis, while the tendency of postgraduate students to acquire research skills is the dependent variable. The results of the hypothesis test, which was conducted using simple linear regression statistics, are shown in Table **1**. An adjusted R^2 of 0.142 was obtained from the simple regression analysis of students' interest in predicting postgraduate students' tendency to acquire research skills in Table **1**. The adjusted R^2 value is a key metric in regression analysis, providing insight into the proportion of the variation in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables in the model while adjusting for the number of predictors. Unlike the regular R^2, the adjusted R^2 accounts for the addition of irrelevant predictors that do not improve the model. This suggests that in predicting postgraduate students' tendency to acquire research skills, the independent variable (students' interest) can account for 14.2% of the variation. With 1 and 48 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 significance level, the F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) derived from the regression table was $F = 95.066$ with a p-value of 0.000. The null hypothesis was rejected. Given that students' interest predicted 14.4% of postgraduate students' tendency to acquire research skills, this finding indicates no significant relationship between students' interest and postgraduate students' tendency to acquire research abilities.

Table 1: Summary of Data and Simple Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Students' Interest in Research on Postgraduate Students' Tendency to Acquire Research Skills

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
0.379	0.144	0.142	3.41515		
Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	1108.782	1	1108.782	95.066	0.000
Residual	6601.416	48	11.663		
Total	7710.197	49			
Predictor Variable	**Unstandardized Coeff**				
	B	**Std error**	**Std coeff**	**t-value**	**P-value**
Constant	42.129	0.648		54.023	0.000
Students interest	-0.349	0.023	-0.400	-0.400	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant): Student interest in research.
b. Dependent Variable: Postgraduate students' tendency to acquire research skills.

DISCUSSION

According to this research hypothesis, which predicts how students' interest in research relates to postgraduate students' tendency to acquire research skills in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, postgraduate students' tendency to acquire research skills is significantly influenced by their interest in research. This result is true because understanding the connection between students' interest in research and their ability to acquire research skills can help universities create programs that boost students' interest in research. Research skills are crucial for postgraduate studies, particularly for thesis writing, dissertation projects, and contributing to academic knowledge. By fostering interest in research, universities can enhance the overall academic success of their postgraduate students.

This finding is consistent with Anastasi B and Urbina T [17] that a student's ability to learn research skills effectively depends on how much interest they have in the subject matter, how well they understand it, and—most importantly—how they put all of that interest into practice. Most of the time, studying and reading are prerequisites for developing such abilities. The desire to acquire may partly stem from an individual's interest in conducting the study. The reason a person chooses to examine research materials is up to him.

The study's findings corroborate the study of Paul N [18] assertion that curiosity engages students' cognitive processes and statistically enhances learning and skill development. One way to conceptualize importance would be as a present psychological engagement state and a tendency to revisit concepts, occasions, or items throughout time [18]. A person's interest both broadens and narrows their experiences, causing them to focus their attention on specific items while ignoring other things that may otherwise draw their attention. The contemporary, the edgy, and the unusual are driven by interest. The desire to approach or participate in some events falls into the category of interest, as does the desire to stay away from certain events.

This study's findings also support the idea that research interest has multiple dimensions [24]. Comprehending the students' interest in research would bridge the gap between the research supervisor and his ward. The main aim of the study was to assess the interest, diagnose the areas that need to be addressed, and find solutions to various problems of doctoral students.

This result contributes to the existing literature because the study reinforces existing theories on motivation and learning, particularly self-determination theory, which posits that intrinsic motivation (like interest) drives learning and skill acquisition. It emphasizes the importance of personal interest as a predictor of academic success in postgraduate education, specifically in developing research competencies. Previous research often focused on external factors, such as curriculum design or supervisor influence, without delving deeply into intrinsic factors like interest. This study shifts the focus to the learner's internal motivation, highlighting its critical role in research skill development. The findings align theoretical perspectives with practical outcomes, emphasizing actionable elements like fostering interest to enhance research capacity among postgraduate students.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The result of this study cannot be generalized to other universities, states, and countries due to its small sample size of 49 respondents. Again, the study utilized a small sample size, which limits the robustness of the statistical analyses and the strength of the conclusions. This constraint arises due to factors such as resource limitations, time constraints, or accessibility to participants. While the sample size was sufficient to identify trends and generate preliminary insights, it does not provide a comprehensive representation of the broader population. Also, while the findings may be valid for the specific group studied, applying them to larger or different populations should be done cautiously. The results might not entirely reflect trends in other settings, contexts, or demographic groups.

Despite the limitation, the small sample size provides valuable insights, particularly since the research explores novel questions and under-researched populations. However, these findings are viewed as indicative rather than conclusive and serve as a foundation for broader investigations. The study maintains scientific integrity and encourages readers and researchers to interpret and build on the findings thoughtfully, having acknowledged this limitation openly.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that postgraduate students' tendency to acquire research skills in the field of study is highly predicted by their enthusiasm for research. The findings suggest that fostering research interest is pivotal to developing postgraduate students' research skills. Practical efforts should focus on creating environments, resources, and opportunities that align with their interests, thereby enhancing their skills and contributing to their academic and professional success. Institutions must consider this interest-driven approach as central to their strategies for postgraduate education. Given the importance of information to civilization, developing the necessary research abilities is essential for humankind. Once more, considering the value of knowledge to humanity, the capacity to develop new knowledge may be a very valuable human quality. This highlights how crucial it is to possess these abilities in order to pursue postsecondary education.

IMPLICATION FOR PSYCHOLOGY

These ramifications contribute to the development and use of psychological knowledge in a variety of contexts, including the professional, academic, and practitioner. Postgraduate students frequently contribute new research topics, techniques, and discoveries to the area by bringing in novel viewpoints and creative ideas. Increased interest in research may foster diversity in study topics and theoretical frameworks, which can lead to the investigation and growth of specialized areas within psychology. High levels of postgraduate research engagement improve an institution's standing in the academic community and research output, which draws in more funds, resources, and elite professors. Postgraduate students who conduct research gain vital skills applicable to academic and non-academic fields, including data analysis, critical thinking, problem-solving, and scientific writing. A background in research can lead to a variety of employment paths, such as positions in academia, clinical research, industrial-organizational psychology, public policy, and mental health services. Postgraduate student research can strengthen the body of evidence supporting therapeutic procedures, policies, and treatments, enhancing the efficacy and efficiency of psychological services.

Postgraduate students who have a keen interest in research and are likely to contribute to the field for the remainder of their lives ensure a robust and dynamic research agenda. By encouraging postgraduate students to pursue research interests, psychology may keep developing and expanding, tackling new problems and enhancing the welfare of both people and societies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations.

1. Graduate schools should hold internal seminars and workshops once a quarter, requiring each postgraduate student to present a standard paper. This will boost abilities, promote knowledge exchange, raise zest for applying knowledge, and increase research interest.

2. Educators ought to create tailored research lesson plans that correspond with their students' objectives and passions, guaranteeing a more customized and captivating educational encounter.

CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors hereby declare that there is no conflicting interest.

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