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## **Improving Efficacy of Elementary Education Teachers in Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities in Southwestern Nigeria**

### **Améliorer l'efficacité des enseignantes et enseignants du primaire dans l'enseignement aux élèves ayant des troubles d'apprentissage dans le sud-ouest du Nigéria**

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#### **Abstract**

This study investigated the impact of teacher training on the efficacy of elementary school teachers in Southwestern Nigeria teaching students with learning disabilities. The study employed a mixed-methods design, including a structured questionnaire and interviews, to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Fifty teachers were trained on the introduction to learning disabilities, and their efficacy for teaching students with disabilities was measured before and after the training using the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale. The Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale (TSDDES) is a validated self-report questionnaire developed by Dawson and Scott (2013). The TSDDES comprises 20 items across five subscales: Instruction, Teacher Professionalism, Teacher Support, Classroom or Behaviour Management, and Related Duties, with participants responding on a 5-point Likert scale. The results showed an increase in the efficacy of teachers for teaching students with learning disabilities after the training, as demonstrated by the post-test scores compared to the pre-test scores. Qualitative findings revealed significant challenges faced by teachers in meeting the diverse needs of students with learning disabilities, including feelings of overwhelm and a lack of resources. However, their participation in the training program led to increased teacher confidence, implementation of new strategies, and a recognition of the importance of ongoing professional development. This study highlights the need for continued teacher training and support to improve the efficacy of teachers in educating students with learning disabilities, and the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. The findings of this study have implications for policymakers, teacher educators, and school administrators in Southwestern Nigeria.

#### **Keywords**

Learning Disabilities, Teacher Efficacy, Training, Elementary Education, Nigeria

#### **Résumé**

Cette étude a examiné l'impact d'une formation sur l'enseignement adapté aux élèves ayant des troubles d'apprentissage sur l'efficacité du personnel d'une école primaire au sud-ouest du Nigéria. Elle a adopté une méthodologie mixte combinant questionnaire structuré et entrevues pour recueillir des données quantitatives et qualitatives. Cinquante enseignantes et enseignants ont reçu une formation

introductive sur les troubles d'apprentissage, et leur efficacité à enseigner à des élèves handicapés a été mesurée avant et après la formation à l'aide de l'échelle *Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale* (TSDDES), un questionnaire d'autoévaluation validé (Dawson et Scott, 2013). L'échelle comprend 20 items répartis en cinq sous-échelles : enseignement, professionnalisme, soutien offert, gestion de classe ou du comportement et tâches connexes, avec réponses sur une échelle de Likert en cinq points. Les résultats indiquent une hausse de l'efficacité des enseignantes et enseignants après la formation, comme le montrent les scores obtenus à l'évaluation réalisée après l'intervention comparativement à celle effectuée avant la formation. Les données qualitatives révèlent toutefois des défis persistants pour répondre aux besoins variés des élèves ayant des troubles d'apprentissage, notamment la surcharge et le manque de ressources. La participation au programme a néanmoins renforcé la confiance du personnel, favorisé l'adoption de nouvelles stratégies et souligné l'importance du développement professionnel continu. L'étude met en évidence la nécessité de maintenir la formation et le soutien offerts aux enseignantes et enseignants afin d'améliorer l'éducation des élèves ayant des troubles d'apprentissage ainsi que l'importance d'un environnement inclusif et soutenant. Les résultats présentent des implications pour les décideuses et décideurs politiques, les formatrices et formateurs, ainsi que pour les administratrices et administrateurs scolaires du sud-ouest du Nigéria.

### **Mots-clés**

Troubles d'apprentissage, efficacité du personnel enseignant, formation, enseignement primaire, Nigéria

## Introduction

In Southwestern Nigeria, elementary education faces significant challenges, especially in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities. According to UNESCO (2019), Nigeria has a large number of out-of-school children, including those with learning disabilities, with many facing barriers to education. Furthermore, research indicates that students with learning disabilities often struggle in traditional classroom settings due to a lack of appropriate support and instructional strategies (Fletcher et al., 2018). Learning disabilities reflect the structural barriers and systemic challenges that prevent students from fully accessing educational opportunities and demonstrating their potential. In Nigeria, limited resources and training opportunities for teachers aggravate the difficulties in meeting the diverse needs of students with learning disabilities (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2017). Without addressing the systemic barriers in the educational environment, students with learning disabilities may continue to experience marginalization, limited educational access, and reduced opportunities for social and academic participation. Addressing the challenges faced by students with learning disabilities requires a multifaceted approach that includes targeted teacher training and support (Grigorenko et al., 2020). By enhancing teachers' understanding of learning disabilities and equipping them with effective instructional strategies, it is possible to create more inclusive learning environments where all students can thrive academically and socially.

Despite efforts to improve education in Nigeria, elementary school teachers in Southwestern Nigeria still face significant challenges in effectively addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities. According to Brydges and Mkandawire

(2020), Nigeria continues to struggle with providing inclusive education, with a significant number of students, including those with learning disabilities, experiencing barriers to learning. This gap between policy and practice is well-documented; Atwal et al. (2021) highlight how inclusive education rights often exist on paper but are inconsistently realized in Nigerian classrooms. Additionally, research by Abosi (2007) highlights the lack of specialized training and resources for teachers to support students with learning disabilities effectively. The inability of teachers to meet the diverse needs of students with learning disabilities not only hinders their academic progress but also perpetuates social exclusion and inequality in education (Voulgarides, Etscheidt & Hernández-Saca, 2024).

Without targeted interventions to enhance teacher preparedness and support in addressing learning disabilities, the gap in educational outcomes for these students is likely to persist. This problem is of critical importance, as it directly impacts the academic and socio-economic prospects of students with learning disabilities and undermines efforts towards inclusive education in Nigeria. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by teachers and the development of targeted interventions to improve their efficacy in supporting students with learning disabilities. Therefore, this research aims to evaluate the impact of teacher training on enhancing teacher efficacy in teaching students with learning disabilities in Southwestern Nigeria. The author posits that the findings of this study will inform policy and practice to create more inclusive learning environments.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the impact of targeted teacher training on the teaching efficacy of elementary school teachers in Southwestern Nigeria, especially with teaching pupils who have learning disabilities. As educational

inclusion becomes a global priority, it is important to understand how regions, particularly those in developing countries such as Nigeria, can provide educators with the required skills and expertise to serve a diverse student population. Recognizing the unique structural challenges experienced by students with learning disabilities, this research aimed to:

- 1) Evaluate the current state of teacher efficacy in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities.
- 2) Assess the impact of a dedicated training program on enhancing this efficacy.
- 3) Understand the classroom implications of this training, especially regarding student engagement, performance, and peer support.

By shedding light on these areas, this study seeks to provide perspectives that may guide future teacher preparation programmes, educational policy changes, and school procedures. This is with the hope that learners with disabilities in Southwestern Nigeria obtain high-quality, inclusive education. The study aims to test the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>0</sub>1: There will be no significant difference in teacher efficacy for teaching students with learning disabilities before and after the training program.
- H<sub>0</sub>2: The level of teacher efficacy in teaching students with learning disabilities will not vary significantly based on teachers' years of experience.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Learning Disabilities***

The definition of learning disabilities remains a subject of debate within the field of education, with scholars offering various perspectives on the construct. Learning disabilities refer to disorders that affect the ability to acquire, understand, or use language, including difficulties with reading, writing, and mathematics (Wong et al.,

2011). However, some scholars argue that this definition may be too broad in that it encompasses a wide range of conditions and fails to capture the multifaceted nature of learning disabilities (Dragoo & Lomax, 2020). While this framework is based on U.S. IDEA policy, uncritically applying it in Nigeria risks perpetuating injustice by prioritizing Western diagnostic norms over local understandings of ability. Therefore, usage of these definitions requires not only contextual adaptation but a critical awareness of how colonial educational legacies may pathologize differences that are socially constructed. Without a clear understanding of the underlying characteristics and manifestations of learning disabilities, educators may struggle to provide appropriate interventions and accommodations for students with diverse learning needs.

While the definition by Dragoo and Lomax (2020) provides a legal framework for addressing learning disabilities in educational settings, it may be insufficient for guiding instructional practices tailored to the specific needs of students (Kovaleski et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a need for a deeper understanding of learning disabilities that takes into account individual differences and contextual factors. Subsequent sections of this literature review will explore the impact of teacher efficacy on addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities, considering the complexities inherent in defining and addressing this diverse group of learners.

### ***Teacher Efficacy***

Teacher efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to influence student learning outcomes, plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities. Previous studies provide findings that supports the importance of examining the self-efficacy levels of teachers to perform certain tasks. For instance,

Ates et al. (2019) using an explanatory mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research methods investigated special education teachers' self-efficacy beliefs towards science courses. Similarly, a study by Binammar, Alqahtani, and Alnahdi (2023) examined factors that may influence the self-efficacy level of special education teachers in delivering transition services to students with disabilities. The pioneering work of Bandura (1997) theorizes that teachers with high efficacy are more likely to adopt proactive instructional strategies and persevere in the face of challenges, which can positively impact student outcomes. Recently, a study by Herzig (2023) asserts that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are important in the implementation of inclusive education services for students with learning disabilities.

However, studies have shown that teachers' beliefs about their efficacy in teaching students with learning disabilities may vary based on factors such as training, experience, and school resources (Van Mieghem, Struyf & Verschueren, 2022). The efficacy of teachers in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities is influenced by a number of factors, including their training (Yakut, 2021), support systems (Woodcock & Faith, 2021), and personal beliefs (Kiely et al., 2014). In the Nigerian context, Nwosu et al. (2020) reported that teachers' specialty, more than gender or experience, significantly influenced their willingness to teach children with special needs in regular classrooms, highlighting contextual nuances in teacher efficacy.

Teachers who perceive themselves as capable and competent are more likely to implement effective instructional practices and provide appropriate support for students with diverse learning needs (Lauermann & ten Hagen, 2021). Similarly, Emmanuel (2019) found that teacher efficacy, combined with school environment and

locus of control, significantly predicted teacher burnout in Nigerian schools, underscoring the importance of contextual factors in shaping efficacy. Nevertheless, challenges such as limited training opportunities and inadequate resources may undermine teacher efficacy in addressing learning disabilities (Zickafoose et al., 2024), highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support teachers in this area. It is important to explore the impact of teacher training programs on enhancing teacher efficacy and improving outcomes for students with learning disabilities.

### ***Importance of Teacher Training***

Teacher training programs play a crucial role in equipping educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively support students with learning disabilities. Research by Desimone (2009) emphasizes the importance of high-quality professional development opportunities that provide teachers with evidence-based strategies for addressing diverse learning needs. Similarly, Emmanuel and Ogundokun (2023) demonstrated how targeted psychosocial interventions, such as emotional intelligence training, enhanced student outcomes, supporting the case for structured teacher development programs. Specifically, training programs focused on understanding learning disabilities and implementing targeted interventions have been shown to enhance teacher efficacy and improve student outcomes (Griffin et al., 2012). Effective teacher training programs go beyond theoretical knowledge and provide educators with practical tools and strategies that they can apply in real-world classroom settings (Vartuli, Snider & Holley, 2016). By equipping teachers with the necessary skills and competencies, training programs empower them to create inclusive learning environments where all students, including those with learning

disabilities, can thrive academically and socially. However, as Shepherd et al. (2016) describe, the effectiveness of teacher training programs in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities may vary depending on factors such as program content, duration, and delivery methods.

More poignantly, it is important to clarify that effective education is more than technical training only; it requires a holistic understanding of human development, social contexts, and individual student experiences (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). While training provides foundational skills and strategies, true pedagogical excellence emerges from deep empathy, critical self-reflection, and a commitment to understanding each student's unique learning journey (Tripon, 2024). Educators must cultivate adaptive mind-sets that go beyond standardized approaches, embracing vulnerability, continuous learning, and a willingness to challenge existing educational paradigms. This involves developing emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to create responsive learning environments that recognize and celebrate diverse learning experiences. Effective teaching is fundamentally a relational practice that demands ongoing personal growth, systemic awareness, and a profound respect for students' inherent capabilities and potential (Caena, 2011). Nonetheless, challenges such as limited access to professional development opportunities and inadequate funding may hinder the implementation of comprehensive training initiatives (Zickafoose et al., 2024). It is important to investigate the impact of teacher training programs on enhancing teacher efficacy and improving outcomes for students with learning disabilities.

### ***Previous Research on Teacher Training and Efficacy***

Previous research has investigated the relationship between teacher training and efficacy in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities. The findings of these studies yielded valuable insights into effective instructional practices and support mechanisms. For example, Abed (2024) found that teacher training programs focusing on strategies such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and assistive technology integration have a positive impact on student outcomes, including academic achievement and social-emotional development. Additionally, professional development that emphasizes evidence-based practices for supporting students with learning disabilities has been linked to improved student engagement and overall success (Chason et al., 2017). Furthermore, research by Forlin et al. (2011) suggests that ongoing professional development opportunities and collaborative learning communities can enhance teacher efficacy and promote inclusive practices in schools.

These findings underscore the importance of investing in teacher training initiatives that provide educators with the necessary knowledge, skills, and support systems to effectively address the diverse needs of students with learning disabilities. Studies by Kilag et al. (2023) and Macdonald et al. (2019) assert that by empowering teachers to adopt evidence-based instructional practices and create inclusive learning environments, training programs have the potential to positively impact student outcomes and promote educational equity. However, there is the need for longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of teacher training programs on teacher efficacy and student outcomes. More research is also needed to explore the effectiveness of different training approaches and identify best practices for supporting teachers in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities.

Despite the growing body of research on teacher training and efficacy in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities, several gaps in the literature remain. While previous studies (e.g., Knapper, 2012; Pressley & Ha, 2021; Ross & Bruce, 2007; Tzivinikou, 2015) have explored the impact of teacher training programs on enhancing teacher efficacy and improving student outcomes, there is a lack of consensus on the most effective approaches to training and professional development in this area. Additionally, the majority of research on teacher training and efficacy has been conducted in high-income countries, with limited attention given to the unique challenges and contexts faced by educators in low-income or resource-constrained settings as southwest part of Nigeria. As such, there is a need for more studies that examine the effectiveness of teacher training programs in different socio-economic environments and cultural settings. Furthermore, while some studies have investigated the impact of teacher training on teacher efficacy, fewer studies have examined the relationship between teacher efficacy and student outcomes, particularly for students with learning disabilities. Understanding the mechanisms through which teacher efficacy influences student engagement, academic achievement, and social-emotional development is essential for informing effective intervention strategies and policy initiatives (Allensworth et al., 2018). Addressing these gaps in the literature is critical for advancing our understanding of the role of teacher training in supporting students with learning disabilities and for informing the development of evidence-based practices and policies in this area.

## **Methods**

### ***Research Design***

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate the impact of teacher training on the efficacy of elementary school teachers in Southwestern Nigeria in teaching students with learning disabilities. The mixed-methods approach allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The training intervention consisted of a program focused on introducing elementary school teachers to challenges and strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities. The training sessions included workshops, lectures, and interactive activities designed to enhance the teachers' knowledge and skills in this specific area.

### ***Participants***

The study involved a sample of fifty elementary school teachers from Ido Local Government, Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria. Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of the participants. These participants were selected through convenience sampling based on their willingness to participate in the study and their proximity to the research site. According to Simkus (2022), convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where participants are selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. The selected sample size captured teachers from every class in elementary education, that is, from kindergarten to basic 5. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 39 years with the mean age of 27.5. Thirty-seven of the participants identified as female, 13 as male. The majority of the participants have between 1-5

years of teaching experience and only 4 participants with 15-20 years of teaching experience. Half of the participants hold the National Certificate in Education (NCE) which as of February 2024 is the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria. The choice of teachers is born out of the relationship between the teachers and learners’ language of communication. An observational study by Paneque and Barbetta (2006) found that special education teachers of English language learners with disabilities have high teacher efficacy, with proficiency in the students’ language positively correlated to teacher efficacy.

*Table 1. Table showing the demographic distribution of study participants.*

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	13	26%
	Female	37	74%
<b>Age (Years)</b>	20-25	26	52%
	26-30	17	34%
	31-35	3	6%
	36-39	4	8%
<b>Teaching Experience (Years)</b>	1-5	31	62%
	5-10	15	30%
	15-20	4	8%
<b>Qualification</b>	NCE	25	50%
	ND	9	18%
	HND	1	2%
	Bachelor’s Degree	9	18%
	Master’s Degree	6	12%

### ***Instruments***

To assess the efficacy of teachers in teaching students with learning disabilities, the study used the “Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale” (TSDDES) developed by Dawson and Scott (2013). This self-report questionnaire is recognized for its validity and comprises 20 items distributed across five subscales: Instruction, Teacher Professionalism, Teacher Support, Classroom or Behaviour Management, and Related Duties. Participants responded to the TSDDES using a 5-point Likert scale. The scale

demonstrated high internal consistency with a reliability coefficient of .913. The TSDES was administered before and after the teacher training program to measure changes in teacher efficacy.

Qualitative data involved semi-structured one-to-one interviews with 20% of the participants after the training. The ten teachers who were interviewed volunteered to be part of the interview process after the entire training session. Sample questions include: "Can you describe any challenges you face when teaching students with learning disabilities?" and "Have you noticed any changes in your approach to teaching students with learning disabilities since completing the training program?" The interviews were conducted in person at the same venue where the training was conducted. Each interview lasted from 15 to 20 minutes per participant.

### ***Procedure***

The quantitative component involved administering the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale (TSDES) to 50 elementary school teachers before and after the training program. Participants for the TES were selected through convenience sampling; the focus was educators who had direct teaching responsibilities for students with learning disabilities and had expressed interest in improving their instructional practices. For the qualitative component, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants (20% of the total sample) drawn from the larger pool of TES respondents. Participants were selected through convenience sampling with two additional criteria beyond initial volunteering, including representation across different grade levels (kindergarten to basic 5) and different teaching experience ranges.

Interviews were conducted in two phases. The first round was held within one week

after the training, while the second round was held three months after the training. This is to allow participants time to implement the strategies they have learned in their classrooms.

The training program, conducted over five full-day sessions, focused on equipping teachers with evidence-based strategies for supporting students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Key topics covered included:

- 1) Understanding different types of learning disabilities and their impact on student performance.
- 2) Differentiated instructional strategies to accommodate diverse learner needs.
- 3) Classroom management techniques for inclusive settings.
- 4) Collaborative teaching practices and building peer support systems.
- 5) Implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.

The participants engaged in interactive lectures, role-playing exercises, and reflective discussions designed to foster practical application of learned concepts. The training was structured to enhance teacher confidence, provide actionable strategies, and create a supportive learning community. Regarding classroom impact, participants were asked to maintain a reflective journal documenting: specific strategies implemented, observed student responses, challenges encountered and perceived changes in student engagement. While participants shared observations about student outcomes, the researcher acknowledges that this study does not provide definitive causal evidence of direct student performance improvements. The findings represent teachers' perceptions and preliminary observations rather than a comprehensive assessment of student academic progress.

### ***Data Analysis***

Quantitative data collected from the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale were analysed using appropriate statistical methods, such as paired t-tests and regression analysis, to determine the significance of changes in teacher efficacy following the training. Data gathered from interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically to provide additional insights into the impact of the training. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). A theme is "a central concept or idea that captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of meaning or patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 82). The data analysis in this study is grounded in a critical realist ontological perspective and a contextualist epistemological approach. Critical realism posits the existence of an objective reality, acknowledging that our understanding of this reality is inherently imperfect.

Within this framework, the analysis aimed to uncover the underlying structures and mechanisms influencing participants' efficacy in teaching learners with disabilities in Southwestern Nigeria. The ontological and epistemological position underpinning this research aligns with reflexive thematic analysis. This approach seeks to unveil not only participants' explicit viewpoints but also the deeper structures influencing their attitudes, considering societal, cultural, and personal factors contributing to their perspectives. The coding process employed in this study was both inductive and deductive. Inductive coding allowed themes to emerge directly from the data, while deductive coding was guided by a priori themes based on existing knowledge and literature. This approach ensured a comprehensive exploration of participants'

experiences and perceptions within the broader socio-cultural context of Southwestern Nigeria. The coding process included identifying semantic (surface-level) and latent (underlying assumptions and meaning) codes. The themes and sub-themes were derived through an iterative process of noticing, collecting, and thinking about patterns within the data.

### ***Positionality Statement***

As a researcher, my positionalities shape my perspectives, methodologies, and interpretations throughout the research process. With a background in researching and supporting students with neurodiversity, particularly dyslexia and dyscalculia, I bring a wealth of first-hand experience to the investigation of teacher efficacy in educating students with learning disabilities in Southwestern Nigeria. My passion for training teachers in underserved communities underscores my dedication to addressing educational disparities and promoting inclusive classroom practices. My practical insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing inclusive education practices in resource-constrained settings enrich the study, providing valuable context and depth to the findings. As the author, my commitment to inclusive education ensures that this study contributes meaningfully to the ongoing discourse on teacher efficacy and inclusive practices in education.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

This research adhered to ethical guidelines, and informed consent was obtained from all participating teachers. The study ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of

participants' responses and maintained their rights throughout the research process.

By utilizing the "Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale" and combining

quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, this study aimed to assess the

impact of teacher training on the efficacy of elementary school teachers in

Southwestern Nigeria in teaching students with learning disabilities comprehensively.

## Results

### *Quantitative Findings*

*Table 2. Paired sample t-test showing pre-test and post-test scores of teacher efficacy to teach learners with disabilities.*

Variable		N	Mean	SD	T	df	Sig
Teacher efficacy to teach learners with disabilities	Pre-test	50	29.80	4.90	-12.50	49	.001
	Post-test	50	49.30	5.55			

The analysis of the hypothesis regarding teacher efficacy for teaching students with learning disabilities before and after the training program revealed significant findings (see Table 2). Prior to the training program, the mean teacher efficacy score was 29.80 (SD = 0.990), but after the program, it significantly increased to 49.30 (SD = 1.055). A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare these scores, resulting in a highly significant difference,  $t(49) = -12.50$ ,  $p < .001$ . The negative t-value indicates a substantial increase in teacher efficacy following the training program. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that there is indeed a significant difference in teacher efficacy for teaching students with learning disabilities before and after the training program.

*Table 3. Summary of linear regression analysis predicting teacher efficacy scores based on teaching experience.*

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	R
Regression	2.829	1	2.829	3.006	.089	.243
Residual	45.171	48	.941			
Total	48.000	49				

A linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between teaching experience and teacher efficacy scores for teaching students with learning disabilities (see Table 3). The results indicated a positive correlation between teaching experience and teacher efficacy scores ( $R = .243$ ,  $p = .089$ ). However, the relationship was not statistically significant at the conventional alpha level ( $p > .05$ ). Therefore, based on this analysis, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the level of teacher efficacy varies significantly based on teachers’ years of experience.

### ***Qualitative Findings***

*Theme 1: Challenges and Concerns.* One prevalent theme among participants was the expression of challenges and concerns related to teaching students with learning disabilities. In this theme, participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and under-equipped to address the diverse needs of students with learning disabilities. This sentiment was echoed by Participant 6, who remarked, “I often feel overwhelmed when trying to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities. It’s like I’m constantly playing catch-up, trying to find new strategies that work for each individual student” (A6). Additionally, Participant 4 highlighted the lack of resources and support available to teachers, stating, “There’s a lack of resources and support available to us as teachers. Sometimes, I feel like I’m just not equipped to handle the diverse needs of my

students, especially those with learning disabilities" (A4). These quotes highlight the challenges teachers face in effectively supporting students with learning disabilities, emphasizing the need for greater resources and support in this area.

*Theme 2: Impact on Teacher Confidence.* The second theme that emerged from interviews is reflected in participants expressing concerns regarding their confidence and self-doubt when working with students with learning disabilities. Participant 7 articulated, "Before this training, when a student with a learning disability struggles in my class, I can't help but feel like I've failed them somehow. It's disheartening, and it makes me doubt my abilities as a teacher" (A7). Similarly, Participant 1 conveyed, "Actually, before now I use to worry that I'm not doing enough to support my students with learning disabilities even though I have a bachelor's degree in education" (A1). Participant 10 was vulnerable enough to say, "I am ashamed to admit this, but the truth is I do not like to see kids with learning disabilities in my class, I believe they should be taken to special schools where they have experts who are trained to provide support to them, because I do not believe I am capable enough to teach them" (A10). These quotes illustrate the emotional toll and self-doubt experienced by teachers when faced with challenges in supporting students with learning disabilities. They highlight the need for increased support and training to boost teacher confidence and efficacy in this area.

*Theme 3: Recognition of the Importance of Teacher Training.* The third theme reflects participants' acknowledgement of the critical importance of teacher training in effectively addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities. Participant 5 emphasized, "I think teacher training in this area is crucial. We need more guidance and support to effectively teach students with learning disabilities" (A5). Similarly, Participant 3 asserted, "I believe that with the right training and resources, we can

make a real difference in the lives of students with learning disabilities. But we need support from our schools and policymakers to make it happen" (A3). Participant 1 said, "I could have been a better teacher if I had been exposed to training like this in the past. Mr Stephen, I hope we can get eye opening trainings of this kind in the future because it seems only those in the city are exposed to this kind of opportunities" (A1). These quotes highlight the recognition among teachers of the vital role that training plays in enhancing their efficacy and ability to support students with learning disabilities. They emphasize the need for greater investment in teacher training initiatives to address the challenges faced in teaching students with learning disabilities.

*Theme 4: Positive Impact of Training.* The fourth theme is on the positive impact of the training the participants had just completed. Participants reported positive outcomes resulting from the teacher training program on supporting students with learning disabilities. Participant 8 remarked, "After the training program, I feel much more confident in my ability to support students with learning disabilities. The strategies and techniques we learned have been invaluable in my classroom" (A8). Additionally, Participant 2 shared, "The training really opened my eyes to new ways of teaching students with learning disabilities. I feel more prepared now to meet their needs and help them succeed academically" (A2). Participant 9 mentioned that "One unexpected outcome of the training is the increased peer support among students. I've noticed that other students are more willing to help their classmates with learning disabilities" (A9). This increase in peer support aligns with existing community solidarity often found in Nigeria educational contexts, where intervention naturally leans on collective engagement rather than isolation. The training, therefore, did not just impart new technical skills but successfully activated these indigenous relational assets,

which fosters a supportive environment that counters the deficit-based narratives often associated with disability. Similarly, Participant 6 declared, "While not all students with learning disabilities have shown significant improvement in their grades, I've noticed a positive change in their attitude towards learning. They're more willing to seek help and try their best because of my new approach." These quotes highlight the tangible benefits experienced by teachers following participation in training programs, including increased confidence, preparedness, and implementation of effective strategies. They underscore the positive impact of training on teacher efficacy and the potential for improved outcomes for students with learning disabilities as a result of targeted professional development initiatives.

## **Discussion**

Hypothesis 1 aligns with the findings of Theme 3 on the importance of teacher training on the efficacy of elementary education teachers in teaching students with learning disabilities. This underscores the critical role of teacher training in equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support students with learning disabilities. The t-test result showed significant increase in the efficacy levels of the teachers as reflected in their mean scores after the training session. Participant 5's emphasis on the importance of teacher training aligns with previous research highlighting the significance of professional development opportunities in improving teacher efficacy and instructional practices (Smith & Delgado, 2020). Similarly, Participant 3's claim regarding the potential impact of training and resources on

student outcomes is in tandem with findings from studies emphasizing the positive association between teacher training and student achievement (Harris & Sass, 2011).

Participant 1's acknowledgment of the potential benefits of training, coupled with a plea for equitable access to such opportunities, reflects the disparities in access to professional development programs among educators in different geographic locations. This aligns with existing literature underscoring the need for equitable distribution of resources and support to ensure that all teachers, regardless of their location, have access to high-quality training (Cardichon et al., 2020; Sailor et al., 2021). The findings of Theme 3 highlight the importance of prioritizing teacher training initiatives to enhance educators' ability to meet the diverse needs of students with learning disabilities. By investing in comprehensive and accessible training programs, policymakers and educational leaders can empower teachers to create inclusive learning environments that promote the success and well-being of all students (Ketikidou & Saiti, 2022).

The findings from both the linear regression analysis and Theme 3 provide valuable insights into the factors influencing teacher efficacy in teaching students with learning disabilities. The linear regression analysis aimed to examine the relationship between teaching experience and teacher efficacy scores. While the analysis revealed a positive correlation between teaching experience and teacher efficacy scores, the relationship did not reach statistical significance at the conventional alpha level. This suggests that while there may be a tendency for teachers with more experience to demonstrate higher levels of efficacy, the effect is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant. This finding aligns with research indicating mixed results regarding the impact of teaching experience on teacher efficacy in special education

settings (Mathews, Myers & Youngs, 2023; Peebles & Mendaglio, 2014; Savolainen et al., 2012).

In contrast, Theme 3 highlights the critical importance of teacher training in enhancing teacher efficacy for teaching students with learning disabilities. Participants emphasized the crucial role of training in providing guidance, support, and resources necessary to effectively address the diverse needs of these students. These sentiments are consistent with existing literature emphasizing the positive impact of targeted professional development initiatives on teacher efficacy and instructional practices. For instance, You, Kim and Shin (2019) found teacher age and training experiences to indirectly influence their self-efficacy in inclusive education through their beliefs about its effectiveness for children with disabilities. By connecting the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data in this study, it can be inferred that while teaching experience may have some influence on teacher efficacy, it is not the sole determining factor. Rather, the recognition of the importance of teacher training, as evidenced by participants' testimonials, underscores the value of ongoing professional development in enhancing teacher efficacy and improving outcomes for students with learning disabilities. Therefore, while experience may contribute to teacher efficacy to some extent, investing in comprehensive and accessible training programs is essential for equipping educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively support diverse learners in inclusive classrooms.

The findings of Theme 1 underscore the significant challenges and concerns experienced by teachers in effectively supporting students with learning disabilities. Participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and under-equipped to address the diverse needs of these students, echoing sentiments found in previous research.

For instance, Äikäs et al. (2023) found that teachers often experience feelings of inadequacy and frustration when attempting to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities. This is further supported by Participant 6's remark about feeling constantly overwhelmed and playing catch-up to find effective strategies for each student, which aligns with the findings of Trinter and Hughes (2021), who noted the ongoing struggle of teachers to adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Moreover, the lack of resources and support highlighted by Participant 4 resonates with existing literature on the challenges faced by educators in accessing necessary resources and assistance (Habibu, 2012). This finding underscores the importance of addressing systemic issues related to resource allocation and support structures within educational settings to better equip teachers in meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities. The findings of Theme 1 highlight the urgent need for policy interventions and increased support mechanisms to alleviate the challenges faced by teachers in effectively educating students with learning disabilities.

The findings of Theme 2 shed light on the significant impact of teacher confidence and self-doubt on their ability to effectively support students with learning disabilities. Participant 7's expression of feeling like a failure when a student with a learning disability struggles in their class resonates with existing literature on the emotional challenges experienced by educators in this context (Moberg et al., 2020; Reicher, 2010). This feeling is further supported by Participant 1's admission of feeling inadequate despite possessing a bachelor's degree in education, highlighting the complexity of addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities even among trained professionals (Kozleski & Smith, 2009). Moreover, Participant 10's vulnerable

confession about feeling ashamed and ill-equipped to teach students with learning disabilities reflects the pervasive stigma and misconceptions surrounding the capabilities of teachers in inclusive classrooms. Emmanuel, Underwood, and Ineese-Nash (2025) argue that disability in Nigeria cannot be separated from colonial legacies and systemic inequities, reinforcing the need to frame teacher training within broader socio-political contexts.

Research on the self-efficacy of elementary education teachers in teaching students with learning disabilities suggests that their perceptions of training, experience, and support significantly influence their confidence in this area (Nowland, 2023). Shaukat, Vishnumolakala, and Bustami (2018) found teachers' self-efficacy to significantly impact their ability to engage students with disabilities. This underscores the importance of addressing attitudinal barriers and providing comprehensive training and support to empower teachers in building their confidence and efficacy in supporting diverse learners. The findings of Theme 2 emphasize the critical need for targeted interventions aimed at sustaining teacher confidence and self-efficacy in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities. By providing teachers with the necessary resources, training, and support, educators can better navigate the challenges inherent in inclusive classrooms and ensure the success and well-being of all students.

The findings from Theme 4 shed light on the positive impact of teacher training programs on both teachers and students. Participants reported experiencing tangible benefits after their participation in the training, This includes increased confidence, preparedness, and implementation of effective strategies. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of targeted professional development initiatives

in enhancing teacher efficacy and instructional practices (Lotter et al., 2018).

Participant 8's remark about feeling more confident in their ability to support students with learning disabilities after the training program underscores the transformative effect of professional development on teacher confidence and self-efficacy (Noben et al., 2021). Similarly, Participant 2's statement reflects the notion that training can open educators' eyes to new approaches and techniques for teaching students with learning disabilities, thereby enhancing their ability to meet the diverse needs of these students.

Furthermore, Participant 9's observation regarding increased peer support among students with learning disabilities suggests that the impact of teacher training extends beyond the classroom and positively influences the attitudes and behaviours of students towards their classmates with disabilities. This finding resonates with existing literature highlighting the role of inclusive classroom practices in fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment (Craig & Kuykendall, 2020). Additionally, Participant 6's declaration about noticing a positive change in students' attitudes towards learning further underscores the broader impact of teacher training on student outcomes. While not all students with learning disabilities may show significant academic improvement, the shift in their attitude towards seeking help and striving to do their best reveals the transformative effect of teacher training on student motivation and engagement (Pugh, Bergstrom & Spencer, 2017). These findings highlight the multifaceted benefits of teacher training programs on both educators and students which stresses the importance of investing in targeted professional development initiatives to improve outcomes for students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

## Conclusion

This study examined the impact of a training program on teacher efficacy in addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities in Southwestern Nigeria. Through a mixed-methods approach combining interviews and quantitative analysis, the research revealed that teacher training significantly increases teachers' efficacy in teaching students with learning disabilities. The quantitative analysis demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in teachers' self-reported efficacy scores. Qualitative data highlighted key themes regarding teacher challenges, confidence, and the importance of training. Participants reported increased confidence and a better understanding of strategies to support students with learning disabilities.

While participants shared observations suggesting potential positive impacts on student engagement and classroom dynamics, the study recognizes the limitations in directly attributing student outcomes to the training program. The reflective journals and interview data provide insights into teachers' perceptions and initial implementation of new strategies, but do not constitute conclusive evidence of student performance improvements. The findings underscore the importance of ongoing professional development and support for teachers working with students with learning disabilities. Future research should employ more rigorous longitudinal studies with direct student outcome measurements to validate the full impact of such training programs. Going forward, investment in teacher training must transcend technical competence to embrace cultural humility and a commitment to decolonizing curriculum. Effective professional development should integrate evidence-based practices with local knowledge systems, ensuring that inclusive education in Nigeria

does not merely replicate Western norms but actively dismantles the systemic barriers that marginalizes students with learning disabilities.

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