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Challenges Faced by Out of School Children with Special Needs in Some Selected Local Government Areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno States, Northeast Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract

There are many out of school children that have no access to education in Northeast Zone, Nigeria. This study aimed at investigation the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in Yola, Michika, Ganye, Bauchi, Bogoto, Katagun, Maiduguri, Biu and Mante local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno States Northeast Zone Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study. A phenomenological design was used, 225 stakeholders and out of school children were purposively sampled. Questionnaire and oral interview were used for data collection, while data generated was analysed and findings were discussed. The study revealed that 5,058 are the prevalence numbers of out of school children with special needs in the above-mentioned local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno State, furthermore, insurgency, poverty and financial constrain, limited access to inclusive education, policies, framework, community advocacy are among the barriers that lead to the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs. The study recommended the full policies implementation, offer alternative accessibility to inclusive school, allocating more finding to special education program, awareness campaign and Forster collaboration among schools, parents, government, NGO^{s} and community leaders to provide support services to avert the challenges faced by out of school children in Northeast State Zone, Nigeria.

Keywords: Challenges, School Children with Special Needs, Michika, Northeast Zone, Nigeria.

Introduction

The goal 4 of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development otherwise referred to as the United Nation Sustainable Development Goal 4, seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Unfortunately, an approximated 263 million children remain out of school around the world including special needs children. This number include children, who never started formal schooling and those who started school but later dropped out (United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2016). Reducing the number of out of school children (OOSC) is a key priority for countries across Sub-Saharan Africa and more than 85% of children in Sub-Saharan Africa are not learning the minimum (UNESCO Institute of statistic (2018). Moreover, education is a fundamental human right, a critical driver for economic advancement and a powerful tool for poverty reduction. Hence, no child of school age should be denied access to quality and equitable education, and an opportunity to acquire skills that guarantee future employability and long-term earning. In Nigeria context, out of school children with special needs and prevalent in both rural and urban settings, but rural areas and isolated or deprived area in general, consistently show higher numbers of out of school children (World Bank, 2019). These children are spread across the state of the federation particularly Northeast state of Nigeria in varying proportion. This situation is of concern to the federal government of Nigeria as noted in the Nigeria Education Ministerial plan 2018-2022) which outlines several strategies targeted at bringing children to school. In spite of these strategies, the number of out of school children with special needs remains significantly high. This insight note aims to provide an overview of the recent data on out of school children with special needs condition in Nigeria, including breakdowns by socioeconomic and other demographic indicators. This will be followed by suggestion of possible intervention, prime of which is accelerated educational programme and other intervention that give birth to National Commission for Almajiri and Out of School Children Education.

Statement of the Problem

The current attack on educational opportunities in the Northeast will have long-lasting ramification on the prospects of the region development. With restricted access to quality and equitable education, the terrain has already made the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education more difficult to achieve. The conflict denies access to education to many children. So called out of school children "faced a higher risk of falling a victim in their future life and other form of exploitation and abuse" according to UNICEF. But they also remain fundamentally ill-equipped to

contribute to post conflict economy productivity. The knowledge deficit in the Northeastern region is placing its population at a severe disadvantage. Without basic skills, their children with special needs condition will often fail to flourish later in life, whether in more advanced stages, they will not have access to productive activities to provide for their families rather they rely on hawking or street begging. Therefore, it is against this background that necessitated doing an in-depth study to find out the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government in Northeast Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to find out the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs condition in some selected local government in Northeast Nigeria: the sub-objectives are;

1. To find out the prevalence numbers of out of school children with special need condition in some selected local government area in Northeast zone Nigeria.
2. To find out challenges faced by out of school children with special need condition in some selected local government area in Northeast zone Nigeria.
3. To find out policies and program are in place to support out of school children with special need condition in some selected local government area in Northeast zone Nigeria.
4. To proffer solution to the challenges faced by out of school children with special need condition in some selected local government area in Northeast zone Nigeria.

Research Question

In order to focused on the phenomena to find out and describe the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs, the following question and oral interview adopted during the research investigation.

Question for Stakeholder

1. What is the prevalence numbers of out of school children with special needs condition in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs condition in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone Nigeria?
3. What are the policies and program in place to support out of school children with special needs condition in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone Nigeria?
4. What are the possible solution to the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs condition in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone Nigeria?

Oral interview question with out of school children with special needs.

1. Have you ever attended School? If yes, for how long?
2. Why did you stop attending school, or why didn't you start in the first place?
3. What are some of the highest challenges faced as an out of school children with special needs?
4. What are your hopes and dreams in the live of out of school children with special need?

Methodology

Phenomenological Design will be used for the purpose of this research. According to Maiwada (2009), phenomenological research design is a qualitative research design approach that focuses on deeply exploring and understanding the meaning of people live experience of a particular phenomenon to capture the essence of their perception and interpretation of that experience without imposing preconceived theories or interpretation from the researcher essentially. It also seeks to understand how individual "live" a specific experience and what meaning they attribute to it.

Population of the Study

Population according to Creswell (2014) "is the entire group of individuals that are researcher is interested in understanding or describing". Babbie (2017) described population as the theoretically specified aggregation of individual or cases from which a sample is to be drawn. Therefore, the population of this research stood as 40,265 and it was presented in a table below:

Table 1: Population of the Study

State	Participants	Male	Female	Total
Adamawa	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	6237	9121	15,358
Bauchi	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	4731	6112	10,843
Borno	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	5341	8723	14,064
Total		**16,309**	**23,956**	**40,265**

Source: **NMPI (2024)**

Sample Size

The Sample size of this research was 225 from the selected local government of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state. The sample size was presented in a table below;

Distribution of Sample Size of Selected Local Government of Adamawa State

Local Gov't	Participants	Male	Female	Total
Yola	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	15	10	25
Michika	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	15	10	25
Ganye	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	15	10	25
Total		**45**	**30**	**75**

Source: **NMPI (2024)**

Distribution of Sample Size of Selected Local Government of Bauchi State

Local Gov't	Participants	Male	Female	Total
Bauchi	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	15	10	25
Bogoro	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	15	10	25
Katagum	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	15	10	25
Total		**45**	**30**	**75**

Source: **NMPI (2024)**

Distribution of Sample Size of Selected Local Government of Borno State

Local Gov't	Participants	Male	Female	Total
Maiduguri	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	15	10	25
Biu	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	15	10	25
Marte	Caregivers/Special Needs Children	15	10	25
Total		**45**	**30**	**75**

Source: **NMPI (2024)**

Sampling Techniques

Sampling techniques that was used in selecting sample size of the respondents for the purpose of this research was purposive sampling techniques. Creswell (2014) described "purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher selected participants based on their expertise, experience or other characteristics that make them information-rich cases". Merriam (2009): described "purposive sampling as a deliberate selection of participants or cases that guided to be representative of the phenomenon being studied. The researcher in this context, purposively selected the subject who possessed the required characteristics who were respondents from the selected local government of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state in Northeast zone, Nigeria.

Instruments for Data Collection

The researcher developed questionnaire instrument named "Challenges Faced by Out of School Children with Special Needs Condition [CFOSCSNC] as well as interview segment for out of school children with special needs. The instrument consists of two sections; section A consist the demographic data of the respondents, while section B measured the variable which is made up of four (4) questions. From interview segment and questionnaire structured based on 4 likert rating pattern of SA (4) to SD (1). The choice of this instrument was because it facilitates collection of data from large number of respondents spread over large area which can be interpreted comparatively (Maiwada, 2009).

Validation of the Data Collection Instrument

To establish validity of the questionnaire and oral interview it was subjected to content validation by the expert from the field of special education, test and measurement. These

experts looked at the instrument in terms of whether if addressed the purpose of the study, language used in order to ascertain they are in line with questionnaire was produced based on the correction, comments and suggestion made by the experts.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability is the consistency of the instrument in producing reliable result. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire the researcher conducted a pilot study using 3 selected local government area of Jigawa, Kano and Gombe States, collected responses were analysed using likert 4 point scale, the means score is 2.5 referred to as cut off point to establish internal consistency, any responses with a mean below 2.5 were considered as rejected, while any responses with a mean score of 2.5 and above were accepted.

Results

This section presents the data collected through oral interview and questionnaire administered to the respondents.

Research Question One: What is the prevalence numbers of out of school children with special needs condition in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone Nigeria?

Table 1: Means rating of prevalence numbers of out of school children with special needs condition in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone Nigeria

Variable	Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yola	Male	978	28.3
	Female	456	
Michika	Male	124	4.1
	Female	87	
Ganye	Male	97	2.9
	Female	54	
Bauchi	Male	457	14.7
	Female	289	
Bogoro	Male	79	2.9
	Female	68	
Katagum	Male	331	10.2
	Female	176	
Maiduguri	Male	879	29.9
	Female	638	
Biu	Male	131	4.5
	Female	98	
Marte	Male	69	2.2
	Female	47	
		5,058	

Table 1 showed that there were 978 male and 456 female out of school children with special needs condition at Yola local government with 28.3%, Michika 124 male and 87 female with 4.1%, Ganye 97 male and 54 female with 2.9%, Bauchi 457 male and 289 female out of school

children with 14.7%, Bogoro 79 male and 68 female with 2.9%, Katagum 331 male and 176 female with 10.2%, Maiduguri 879 male and 638 female with 29.9%, Biu 131 males and 98 females with 4.5%, Marte 69 males and 47 females out of school children with special needs condition with 2.2%.

Research Question Two: What are the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone, Nigeria?

Table 2: Means rating on the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Ef x	X	Remarks
1	Conflict Zone, Insurgency, Displacement, Internal migration and Natural disaster.	60	18	9	3	315	3.5	**Agreed**
2	Poverty and financial constraints	72	12	4	2	334	3.7	**Agreed**
3	Limited access to inclusive education	78	9	-	3	342	3.8	**Agreed**
4	Limited policy framework and inadequate funding resources allocation	54	21	9	6	303	3.3	**Agreed**
5	**Limited community advocacy awareness and understanding cultural and linguistic barriers**	**69**	**15**	**5**	**1**	**332**	**3.6**	**Agreed**

The results in table 2 above showed that item 1 with mean score of 3.5 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that conflicts zone, insurgency, displacement, internal migration and natural disaster are one of the major challenges faced by out of school children. Item 2 with mean score of 3.7 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that poverty and financial constraints are the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs. Item 3 with the mean score of 3.8 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that limited access to inclusive education is one of the key challenges faced by out of school children with special needs condition. Item 4 with mean score of 3.3 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that limited policy framework and inadequate funding resources allocation are major challenges faced by out of school children with special needs condition. Item 5 with the mean score of 3.6 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that limited community advocacy awareness and understanding cultural and linguistic barriers are among the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast zone, Nigeria.

Research Question Three: What are the policies and programs in place to support out of school children with special needs condition in some selected local government areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone Nigeria?

Table 3: Means rating on policies and programs in place to support out of school children with special needs condition in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zones Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Ef x	X	Remarks
6	National policy on Special Needs Education that ensure education for all regardless of circumstances and promote total inclusion.	5	10	15	60	140	1.5	**Disagreed**
7	Universal Basic Education Act (UBE) that provide free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children.	24	21	12	33	216	2.4	**Disagreed**
8	Establishment of Residential schools to cater for all children with special needs condition	12	15	18	45	174	1.9	**Disagreed**
9	Implementation of existing policies and program that promote children with special needs condition education	21	9	12	48	183	2.0	**Disagreed**
10	**Supporting children development Centre for easy accessible of inclusive educational programme**	**6**	**18**	**15**	**51**	**159**	**1.7**	**Disagreed**

The results in table 3 above showed that item 6 with mean score of 1.5 disagreed that there is no National policy on Special Needs Education that ensure education for all regardless of circumstances and promote total inclusion. Item 7 with mean score of 2.4 which is less than cut off point of 2.5 disagreed that there is Universal Basic Education Act (UBE) that provide free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children. Item 8 with the mean score of 1.9 which is less than cut off point of 2.5 disagreed that the government established residential schools to cater for all children with special needs condition. Item 9 with mean score of 2.0 which is less than cut off point of 2.5 disagreed that there is Implementation policies and program that promote children with special needs condition educational system. Item 10 with the mean score of 1.7 which is lower than cut off point of 2.5 disagreed that there is support of children development Centre for easy accessibility of inclusive education.

Research Question Four: What are the possible solutions to the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast Zone, Nigeria?

Table 4: Means rating on the possible solutions to the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast, Zone Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Ef x	X	Remarks
11	Addressing the conflicts zone, insurgency, displacement, internal migration and natural disaster	51	24	12	3	303	3.3	**Agreed**
12	Increased and improved support services and resources accessibility	63	21	6	-	327	3.6	**Agreed**
13	Educational awareness campaigns for easy accessibility of inclusive education	72	15	-	3	336	3.7	**Agreed**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Efx	X	Remarks
14	Policy reforms and implementation	69	18	-	3	333	3.7	Agreed
15	**Community advocacy awareness campaigns for cultural and linguistic barriers**	**72**	**16**	**2**	**-**	**340**	**3.7**	**Agreed**

The results in table 4 above showed that item 11 with mean score of 3.3 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that addressing the conflicts zone, insurgency, displacement, internal migration and natural disaster could be one of the possible solutions to the challenges faced by out of school children. Item 12 with mean score of 3.6 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that increased and improved support services and resources accessibility could be some of the possible solutions to the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs. Item 13 with the mean score of 3.7 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that educational awareness campaigns for easy accessibility of inclusive education could be one of the possible solutions to the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs. Item 14 with mean score of 3.7 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that policy reforms and implementation could be some of the possible solutions to the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs. Item 15 with the mean score of 3.7 which is greater than cut off point of 2.5 agreed that community advocacy awareness campaigns for cultural and linguistic barriers could be one of the possible solutions to the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast zone, Nigeria.

Interview Segment with Out of School Children with Special Needs

1. **Have you ever attended School? If yes, for how long?**
   96 respondents stated that they did not attend any school right from their childhood, while 15 respondents stated that they attended up to primary 4 from where they stop attending. Meanwhile 17 respondents stated that they were drop out immediately after first term of their primary one while the remaining 7 respondents testify that they stop attending the primary school after completing primary one.
2. **Why did you stop attending school, or why didn't you start in the first place?**
   71 respondents stated that it is part of their home upbringing that children are no longer enrolled into the western education system, while 25 have no reason why they did not attend school, however 35 respondents stated that lack of financial and economic support necessitate them to withdraw from the school, while 4 respondents were withdrawn due to the poor family background and fear of mockery or rejection by other pupils.
3. **What are some of the highest challenges faced by out of school children with special needs?**
   103 respondents said that they faced emotional distress due to being left behind while peers attend schools, they also highlighted safety concern when navigating the

environment. Furthermore, 32 respondents lamented lack of policy framework about educating the children with special needs, series of conflict and displacement, internal migration and natural disasters, societal stigma and discrimination as well as lack of community support or tailored social services for children with special need.

4. **What are your hopes and dreams in the live of out of school children with special need?**

   124 respondents believe that with government support policies and provision of inclusive education, free assistive technological devices and financial support that uplift the life of out of school children with special need to a better position, 10 respondents proposed collaboration with their union, NGOs to offer scholarships and awareness campaigns as a way of guiding younger ones with special needs that are nursing to join the street begging rather acquiring education and vocational and technical skills for the betterment of their future.

Discussion of Findings Based on Research Questions

It is important to note that the discussion of the findings on the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno states, Noretheast zone, Nigeria is carried out under (4) research questions and oral interview that guided the study. Below are the discussion in relation to the current happening observed in regard to research findings.

Research Question One: The finding revealed that there were 978 male and 456 female of out of school children with special needs in Yola local government, 124 male and 87 female from Michika, 97 male and 54 female from Ganye LGA, 457 male and 289 female from Bauchi LGA, 79 males and 68 females from Bogoro LGA, 331 males and 176 females from Katagum LGA, 879 males and 638 females from Maiduguri local government metropolitan, 131 males and 98 females from Biu as well as 69 males and 47 females from Marte of out of school children with special needs.

Research Question Two: Findings in table two revealed items 1,2,3,4 and 5 with means scores of 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 3.3 and 3.6 respectively above the criterion mean score of 2.5 clearly stated that insurgency, displacement, internal migration, poverty and financial constraint, lack of accessing inclusive education, limited policy framework and limited community advocacy awareness are the major challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast zone, Nigeria.

Research Question Three: Findings in table 3 revealed that item 6,7,8,9, and 10 with mean scores of 1.5, 2.4, 1.9, 2.0, and 1.7 respectively below the criterion mean score of 2.5 clearly stated that there is no policy framework, provision of compulsory education, residential school to cater for all children with special need and no supporting development center for out of school children with special needs in some selected local government area of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast zone, Nigeria.

Research Question Four: Findings in table four revealed that item 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 with a mean scores of 3.3, 3.6, 3.7, 3.7, and 3.7 which are above the criterion mean score of 2.5 clearly stated that addressing insurgency, displacement, internal migration, improved support and resources accessibility, educational awareness campaigns, policies reform and implementation and community advocacy awareness for cultural and linguistic barriers are the best possible solutions that will eliminate the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in some selected local government areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast zone, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings Based on Oral Interview

Oral Interview Question One: The findings revealed that 96 respondents didn't attend any school right from childhood, while the remaining respondents started that they attended schools but dropped out along the line due to some reasons.

Oral Interview Question Two: The findings revealed that 71 respondents stated that it's part of their family upbringing, that children were not enroll into the western education, while other respondents have no reason why their parent didn't enroll them into school while other respondents stated that lack of financial support necessitates them to withdraw from the school, 4 respondents withdrawn due to poor family background and fear of mockery or rejection by peer groups.

Oral Interview Question Three: The findings revealed that out of school children with special need faced emotional distress due to being left behind while peers attending school, conflicts and displacement, internal migration, societal stigma, and discrimination as well as lack of community support to tailored societal service for children with special needs.

Oral Interview Question Four: The finding revealed that government policies, provision of inclusive education, free assistive technology devices, collaboration with special needs union, NGOs and government to offer scholarship and awareness campaigns for the betterment of out of school children with special needs in some selected local government areas of Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno state, Northeast zone, Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the results obtained, the prevalence members of out of school children with special need are growing, government and other stakeholders need to address it. Furthermore, conflicts, insurgency and displacement are among the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs and there is need to get a national policy framework that will be fully implemented as well as addressing insurgency, displacement and create educational and community campaign awareness that will stop or eliminate the challenges faced by out of school children with special needs in area of study.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the research;

1- Offer alternative educational activities for children who cannot access traditional school due to their disabilities.

2- Implement policies and programs to support out of school children which will provides mental health support, vocational training and basic literacy skills.
3- Increase funding by allocating more resources to special education programs to ensure school have necessary materials and facilities.
4- Conduct awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and promote understanding people with disabilities within the community.
5- Promote inclusive education by addressing social stigma and encouraging inclusive attitudes and behaviours.
6- Strengthen enforcement and monitoring policies and supporting special education to ensure effective implementation.
7- Foster collaboration among schools, parents, government, NGOs and community to provide support services to children with special needs.

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