

Assessment of Undergraduates' Superstitious Beliefs Towards Students with Disabilities: Implication for Adolescents with Disabilities

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to carry out a study on the assessment of undergraduates' superstitious belief towards students with disabilities in University of Ilorin. The study population consisted of two hundred and twenty (N=220) non-handicapped students of University of Ilorin. The researcher purposively selected faculties that admitted students with disabilities. The non-handicapped students who were willing to participate in the study were randomly selected from four faculties. The scale used to measure undergraduate's superstitious belief was titled 'Superstitious Beliefs of Students with Disability Questionnaire (SBSDQ)' Section A contained information about their demographic data of the respondents while section B has 10 items on superstitious beliefs of persons with disabilities. Using Cronbach alpha test, a reliability index of 0.73 was obtained. Data gathered were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and regression analysis. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The combination of gender, religion, faculties and levels do not significantly predict undergraduates' superstitious beliefs of undergraduates, however religion did. It was therefore recommended that university administration should organize seminars and enlightenment programmes on scientific causes of disability. This will help in correcting the negative attitudes of undergraduates towards people with disability.

Keywords: Superstitious belief, University, Students with Disabilities, Assessment

تقييم معتقدات الخرافة للطلاب الجامعيين تجاه زملائهم من ذوي الإعاقة؛ إضاءات

للمراجعين

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المستخلص

ان الهدف من هذا البحث إجراء دراسة حول تقييم الاعتقاد الخرافي لدى الطلاب الجامعيين تجاه الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة في جامعة إيلورين. يتكون مجتمع الدراسة من مائتين وعشرين (N = 220) من الطلاب غير المعوقين من جامعة إيلورين. اختارت الباحثة عن قصد الكليات التي تقبل الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة. الطلاب غير المعوقين الذين أبدوا استعدادهم للمشاركة في الدراسة حيث تم اختيارهم عشوائياً من أربع كليات. كان المقياس المستخدم لقياس المعتقدات الخرافية لدى الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة بعنوان "المعتقدات الخرافية للطلاب ذوي الإعاقة" (SBSDQ) يحتوي القسم أ على معلومات حول البيانات الديموغرافية الخاصة بهم للمستجيبين بينما يحتوي القسم ب على 10 عناصر حول المعتقدات الخرافية للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة. باستخدام اختبار كرونباخ ألفا ، تم الحصول على مؤشر موثوقية قدره 0.73. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها باستخدام حساب التكرار والنسب المئوية وتحليل الانحدار. تم اختبار جميع الفرضيات عند مستوى أهمية 0.05 ألفا. إن الجمع بين الجنس والدين والكليات والمستويات لا يتنبأ بشكل كبير بالمعتقدات الخرافية للطلاب الجامعيين،

بغض النظر عن الدين. لذلك أوصي بأن تنظم إدارة الجامعة ندوات وبرامج توعية حول الأسباب العلمية للإعاقة. سيساعد هذا في تصحيح المواقف السلبية للطلاب الجامعيين تجاه الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة.

الكلمات الدالة: عقيدة خرافية، جامعة، طلاب ذوو إعاقة، تقويم

Introduction

Disability can be defined as the lack of ability or restriction to perform a given task within the range considered normal [1]. The term disability covers activity limitations, participation restriction and impairment. An impairment deals with dysfunction of body structure that could lead to activity limitation [2]. These conditions may be developmental in nature, intellectual, physical, sensory or mental challenges [3]. This limitation affects the physical and psycho-cognitive activities of persons with disability. There are different types of disabilities and these include visual impairment, physical disabilities (which affects dexterity and mobility), hearing impairment and learning disability [4]. The cause of disability in Nigeria can be traced to superstitious beliefs fallacy [5].

Superstitious beliefs are opinions and cultural norms that are passed down from one generation to another [6]. These beliefs are always entrenched in the culture's legacy [7]. Superstitious belief are the explanations given to the cause of an event, which has no empirical backing [8]. In social psychology, superstitious belief are ways in which people attribute the cause of an event to an object [9]. This eventually influences the way a person thinks and react to situations [6]. Kumar [10] noted that these beliefs are often based on uncertainties and false interpretation of natural events. Superstitious beliefs are irrational thoughts that lacks scientific proofs. Till date, there is no clear evidence on how individuals generates a particular superstitious belief. Superstition are widely held irrational beliefs that influences external factors [11]. Researchers [12] [13] have investigated different types and effects of superstitious behavior on students' performance. Etieyibo and Omiegbe [14] discovered that there is a link between religion, student's performance and cultural superstitious belief. In Islamic religion, any evil occurrence tied to the will of God while Christians attribute such evil incidence to the to the activities of demons. There are many false beliefs about disability, for example, people believe that the transgression of the past generation, violation of societal norms and ancestral curse can lead to the occurrence of disability in families. Ajobiewe [15] noted that in Africa, disability is often traced to the sin or promiscuity of the mother while the breaking of social taboos like the mother engaging in sex during pregnancy with another man is believed to be a cause that can lead to the deformity of the unborn child. According to Olaleye, Ogundele. Deji, Ajayi [16] the attitude of students towards peers with disability are linked to information they have received in the past. However, Rouso [17] and Garcia, Mendez-Perez and Ortiz [18] revealed that the negative attitude students towards persons with disability are the major obstacle to inclusive education. Akinpelu [3] and Moriña, Cortés-Vega, Molina [19] explained that most students find it difficult to relate with the challenged students due to the various superstitious belief.

In some societies, children with disability were rejected, stigmatized and sometimes are killed because they are seen as signs of bad luck. Miles [20] explained that the reaction of the society often convey rejection, hostility and unfriendliness Munyi [21]

noted that in some societies persons with disability are socially excluded from participating in community developmental programmes. Nyangweso [5] revealed that in some parts of Nigeria, children with disability are seen as supernatural beings and are considered as being close to God, so they are worshipped. According to Bruce [22], the Hebrews in the ancient Greece belief that disability and sickness are signs that shows that such an individual is a sinner. Omiegbe [9] clearly explained that the superstitious beliefs by the non-handicapped population stems from the unconscious mechanism that disability is a retribution for deemed evil, as such, persons with disability are seen as dangerous and are capable of inflicting evil. Abosi and Ozoji [23] noted that most Nigerians often attribute the causes of disabilities to *juju*, witchcraft, God, unforeseen supernatural forces. Parents sometimes throw children with disability away in order to avoid stigmatization [24]. These attitudes are displayed as a result of improper understanding of disabilities [25]. For example, it is believed in some parts of Nigeria, that albinism and people with hunch back body parts are the best for moneymaking rituals. Unprotected sex with people with disability is an antidote for the cure of HIV infection. These false superstitious assumptions have led to violence against persons with disability even within the educational system [15]. Many avoid people with disability, because many people believe that when a pregnant woman who constantly relate with them can give birth to a child with disability [26]. Omiegbe [9] noted that in Africa, illness, sickness and any form of deformity are constantly attributed to external factors.

Theoretical background

Skinner propounded operant conditioning theory in the year 1947. He explained through multifaceted reinforcement arrangements behaviours are displayed. Skinner theory emphasized on the fact that behavior can also be re-patterned through the reinforcement a person receives from the environment. Therefore, human behaviors are determined by past behaviors. The theory affirmed that subsequent behaviour could stimulate the occurrence of the future behaviour if such behaviour is pleasant (positive reinforcement). However, if the incident is negative, such behaviour might not occur again (punishment). Therefore, learning takes place through operation of positive reinforcements and punishments. The theory of Skinner [27] explained how misinterpretation of events could lead to occurrence of superstitious beliefs and that most behavior are caused by external factors. In his experiment, skinner observed that the pigeons also developed superstitious behavior because the regularly fed pigeons believe that when they act in a certain way they are likely to have access to food despite the fact that such posture has no relationship with food reward. As such, the pigeon keeps reinforcing such behavior in order to have access to the supply of more food. This theory helps to explain how superstitious belief occur because of mistake of causal link of two phenomena, which from a rational standpoint has no relationship with one another [28]. For example, Adewara [29] observed that one of the most common superstitious belief in Nigeria is that an evil occurrence is likely to strike in the future when a black cat crows in one's environment. Marsh and Wallance [30] and Stone-MacDonald and Butera [31] classified beliefs on disability into three major areas. This include the traditional animism, religious fatalism and medical determinist. Traditional animism believes that disability occur as a result of witchcraft or punishment from God while religious fatalism

emphasized that disability is an act of Gods will that could happen to anyone. Medical perspective based their evidence on scientific discoveries.

With civilizations, introduction of inclusive education and medical advancement, people now have a better understanding on the scientific causes of disability. The introduction of inclusive education has enhanced the establishment of integration system of education [32]. This has helped in uncovering unscientific facts about person with disabilities as they relate with peers in the normal school system [33]. Integration is the process of educating persons with disability alongside with peers without disabilities in the same regular school setting [34]. With the current development in the field of education, the government provides facilities according to the 1993 United Nation mandate for the education of persons with disability. The integration process has assisted in reducing stigmatization and at the same time provided equal prospects for people who are physically challenged to be educated.

In line with the United Nation mandate, the Federal Government of Nigeria organized a brainstorming conference on 19th May 1988 with a view of providing higher education for individuals with hearing disability. After a long deliberation, university of Ilorin was nominated to start the pilot project in Nigeria and by June 14, 1990, the Centre for Supportive services was established. Although this center was meant to cater for people with hearing disability at the initial stage but now the university has moved forward by admitting other forms of person with disabilities like people with visible and physical disabilities e.t.c. The major duty of this unit is to provide assistance and support persons with disability within the university. Interpreters are employed to assist students with hearing impairments using sign language as a tool for lecture delivery. They also assist the students with visual impairment and support other forms of disabilities. Students without disabilities are thought sign language; this has assisted in creating a good rapport between the challenged and non-challenged students thereby breaking down the war of superstitious belief that is common among Nigerians.

Problem Statement

In Nigeria, there is no comprehensive data about people with disability. According to Rouso [17] estimated that about 243 million people are living with disabilities worldwide over. This group of people are often marginalized because of different superstitious belief. In addition, there is no efficient policies that caters for the education of these group of people [35]. Students often find it difficult relating with person with disability Ogechi and Ruto [36]. There are lots of literature on disability for example Rugoho and Maphosa [37] worked on challenges faced by women with disabilities, Njelesani, et al [38] looked at violence against children with disabilities in West Africa. The focus of this study is to assess undergraduates' superstitious beliefs towards students with disabilities in University of Ilorin, Nigeria

As such the research questions focused on: 1. What are the superstitious beliefs of Undergraduates about students with disability in University of Ilorin? 2. Similarly, the study would also seek to investigate the influence of undergraduate's gender, religion, faculties and levels on their superstitious beliefs towards students with disability.

Methodology

Participants

The population consist of two hundred and twenty (N=220) non-handicapped students of University of Ilorin. The researcher purposively selected faculties where students with disability are studying. Students who were willing to participate in the study where randomly selected from the four faculties and served with the questionnaire. Equally, 166 (53%) males and 104 (47%) females were part of the study, 140(64%) respondents were Christians, 73 (33%) are of Islamic religion 73 (3%) while 7(3) practice African Traditional Religion. Students from faculties of Art 55 (25%), Education 55 (25%), Science 55(25%) and Social Science 55 (25%) participated in the study. Respondents from 100 level where 28 (13%), 200 level 30 (14%), 300 level 74(34%), 400 level 50(23%) 500 level 38 (17%). The respondents were all undergraduate students of university of Ilorin. The criteria for participation in the study include (a) participants must have students with disability in their class (b) they must be students in university of Ilorin.

Procedure

Most of the respondents submitted the filled questionnaire the same day, while the rest where collected within the week. Out of the 250 questionnaire given out to the respondents, only 230 was returned back to the researcher. Ten of the questionnaire that was not well completed were discarded. The researcher finally used 220 questionnaires for the analysis. The service of research assistant was obtained. The trained assistant and the researcher explained the purpose of the research to the respondents and instructed them on how the questionnaire will be filled. The participants were made to understand that there were no right or wrong answers. The questionnaires were directly administered to the respondents. The researcher also conducted an interview with ten non-handicapped students who have related at one time or the other with persons with disability.

Measuring Instruments

The participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire and their responses were treated strictly confidential. The students completed the demographic details on the questionnaire and these include gender, religion, faculties and level of the respondents. Researcher's designed questionnaire entitled Superstitious Beliefs of Students with Disability (SBSD) was used to gathered information from the respondents. In section A students gave information about their demographic data. Section B has 10 items. The regression analysis was equally used in analyzing the data collected from the respondents at 0.05 level of significant. The Cronbach alpha reliability of 0.73 was obtained.

Ethical Consent

The researcher obtained permission from the student affair office before embarking on the research. A letter was obtained granting the permission to serve the questionnaire to the students. In addition, a verbal informed consent was obtained from the participants before the administration of the questionnaire.

Results

Superstitious beliefs of undergraduates towards students with disability

A cut-off score of 2.50 was used as the baseline for determining participants' superstitious beliefs towards students with disability since the questionnaire items were structured in a four-response-type. Thus, items found with mean scores equal or above 2.50 were remarked as 'Agreed' while items with mean scores below 2.50 were remarked otherwise. As shown in Table 1, ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th are items whose mean scores were above 2.50 while ranked 5th, 6th, up to 10th were below 2.50.

Research Question: What are the superstitious beliefs of Undergraduates about students with disability in University of Ilorin?

Table 1: Superstitious Beliefs of Undergraduates towards Students with Disability in University of Ilorin

SN	Superstitious Beliefs	Mean	S.D.	Rank	Remark
Traditional beliefs: Persons with disability					
1.	are demonic	1.46	0.72	6 th	Disagreed
2.	can bring bad luck to the family	1.42	0.65	8 th	Disagreed
3.	are seen as a symbol of a curse in the family.	1.41	0.68	9 th	Disagreed
4.	are born as a result of the mother sitting on the mortar during pregnancy.	1.43	0.65	7 th	Disagreed
5.	Are born into families as a result of witchcraft manipulation during pregnancy.	2.54	0.74	4 th	Agreed
Religious beliefs: Persons with disability					
6.	sent into families as a result of punishment from God	1.36	0.58	10 th	Disagreed
7.	are human beings that comes from another spiritual world	1.55	0.73	5 th	Disagreed
8.	to examine couples faith in God	2.92	0.87	2 nd	Agreed
9.	are born as a result of mothers wickedness	2.57	0.97	3 rd	Agreed
10.	are born as God's will.	3.27	0.92	1 st	Agreed

Thus, table 1 shows that undergraduates of University of Ilorin agreed/believed that children with disability are born as, God's will, to examine couples' faith in God. The students also agreed that students with disability are born as a result of mother's wickedness and witchcraft manipulation during pregnancy. They disagreed with the perception that students with disability are demonic and that they can bring bad luck to the family. In addition, they disagreed with the fact that these children are symbols of curses in the family and are born as a result of the mother sitting on the mortar during pregnancy. They refused the common belief that they are sent into families as a result of punishment from God.

Research Question:2 What is the influence of undergraduate's gender, religion, faculties and levels on their superstitious beliefs towards students with disability.

Regression Analysis of Undergraduates' Gender, Religion, Faculties, Levels and their Superstitious Beliefs towards Students with Disability

Table 2(A): Regression Analysis of Undergraduates' Gender, Religion, Faculties, Levels and Their Superstitious Beliefs towards Students with Disability in University of Ilorin

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Squares	F-value	Sig.
Regression	128.981	4	32.245		
Residual	4344.455	215	20.207	1.596	0.177
Total	4473.436	219			

a. Dependent variable: superstitious beliefs towards students with disability

b. Predictors: (constant), gender, religions, faculties and levels

Table 2 (B): Regression Model Summary of Gender, Religions, Faculties and Levels on Undergraduates' Superstitious Beliefs towards Students with Disability

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.170 ^a	0.029	0.011	4.495

a. Predictors: (constant), gender, religions, faculties and levels

Table 4 (C): Relative Contributions of Each Factors to Undergraduates' Superstitious Beliefs towards Students with Disability

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	15.690	1.869			8.396	0.000
Gender	-0.451	0.621	0.050		-0.726	0.469
Religions	0.524	0.243	0.150		2.153	0.032
Faculties	0.455	0.587	0.053		0.774	0.440
Levels	-0.053	0.305	-0.012		-0.175	0.861

a. Dependent Variable: undergraduates' superstitious beliefs

b. Predictors: (constant), gender, religions, faculties and levels

The model in Table 2(A) indicates the linear combination of predictors/factors (i.e. gender, religions, faculties and levels). The F-value 1.596 was obtained with a p-value 0.177 when computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of 0.177 is greater than 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis two is retained. Therefore, the combination of the factors significantly did not predict the dependent variable ($F_{(4, 215)} = 1.596, p > 0.05$). Thus, combination of gender, religion, faculties and levels do not significantly predict undergraduates' superstitious beliefs towards students with disability in University of Ilorin. In order to ascertain the contribution of all the factors together, r-square was calculated and output is in Table 2 (B)

As shown in Table 2 (B), all the factors (gender, religions, faculties and levels) jointly contributed R-Square of 0.029, representing 2.9% to the undergraduates'

superstitious beliefs towards students with disability. This implies that factors such as gender, religions, faculties and levels jointly explained 2.9% of the total variance on undergraduates' superstitious beliefs towards students with disability in University of Ilorin. To determine the contribution of each of the factors, Beta Weight was calculated and the outputs are shown in Table 2 (C).

Table 2(C) shows the relative contribution of each of the factors to undergraduates' superstitious beliefs towards students with disability in University of Ilorin. The table reveals that religions predict more of undergraduates' superstitious beliefs towards students with disability with Beta weight of 0.150 followed by faculties (0.053); and gender (0.050). Thus, religion is the only factor that significantly ($p \{0.032\} < 0.05$) predicts undergraduates' superstitious beliefs towards students with disability in University of Ilorin while others (gender, faculties and levels) did not ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion of the Findings

This study revealed that majority of the respondents agreed/believed that children with disability are born as a result of witchcraft manipulation during pregnancy, mother's wickedness, of God's will. Abosiand Koay[25] explained that negative perceptions of children with disability are rooted in cultural beliefs and superstitions. In Nigeria, most of these beliefs are inscribed in the training process. Eradicating these superstitious beliefs could be a challenge. Despite the fact that many of the superstitious belief have been deflated with the evidence based scientific proofs yet, students manifest these beliefs as they relate with their peers with disability Subbotsky [39]. Although it is expected that the interaction of the challenged and non-challenged in the school settings over the years would have changed the perspective of unchallenged students about persons with disability. Neyadi [40] confirmed that integration and inclusive education helps in breaking barrier between the challenged and unchallenged students.

The combination of gender, faculties and levels do not significantly predict undergraduates' superstitious beliefs towards students with disability in University of Ilorin. However, religion significantly correlated superstitious belief. The concept of superstitions and magical beliefs differs across gender divide. In a study carried by Marjaana and Kia [41] on superstitions and irrational beliefs, the students affirmed that superstitions were unscientific, despite the advancement in science and technology, many of them still practice astrology. Irrespective of gender, levels and the faculties these students belong to, Morina [42] affirmed that superstitious beliefs are common among different groups of high school and university students. According to Ballard [43] 45% of Americans believe in the existence, ghosts, devils and spiritual healing. Contrary to this findings Albert [8] submitted that in general terms, women are more superstitious than men are.

Religion significantly correlated the superstitious belief of students. This finding supports the view of Adewara [30], which revealed that the world is undoubtedly proliferated with various religions and beliefs. Among the prominent religions in the world today are Christianity, Islam and traditional religion. All these religions hold different views about superstitious beliefs but their beliefs about children with disability are almost the same, although these religious groups are different in their modes of worship Omiegbe [9]. For example, in all the religions, the occurrence of evil and good is

because of Gods will. In the same vein, Ozoji [44] discovered that several religious rituals are often done by different people to wade off negative superstitious belief that encourages giving birth to children with disability. This attitude practiced by parents, affirms that children with disability are not embraced in the society. It is a known fact that superstitious beliefs carry a great deal in the way students relate to their peers with disability Etieyibo, and Omiegbe [14]. Abosi and Ozoji [24] noted that the combination of various superstitious beliefs about persons with disability are anchored on various factors such as sex witchcraft, supernatural powers and Gods will.

Implication for Adolescents with Disability

Adolescents with disability often see themselves different from others and this often leads to inferiority complex. The middle age adolescence are periods when youths seek for attention from their peers, when this is absent, it can lead to stigmatization and rejection of people with disabilities. Majority of the undergraduates seeking for admission into University of Ilorin are mostly adolescents. The adolescents with disability should be ready to adapt to the various unfounded beliefs that people have about persons with disability, knowing such superstitious belief are like to change as they relate with the non-challenged students. The challenged adolescents stepping into the four walls of the university should be prepared to develop interpersonal relationship skills. This will assist them to overcome this period with ease and look beyond their disability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, some of the students agreed on the superstitious items while others disagreed. Also, a combination of gender, religion, faculties and levels do not significantly predict undergraduates' superstitious beliefs while religion did. Based on the findings of this study, the university administration should organize seminars and enlightenment programmes on scientific causes of disability. This will help in correcting the negative attitudes of undergraduates towards people with disability. Government should encourage the establishment of inclusive education in more universities. This will help in demystifying the superstitious belief about persons with disability.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

There are no conflicts of interest

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