



<https://www.tspeducator.com>

Volume 24; Issue 2; October 2025; Page No. 126-132.

Influence of Emotional Adjustment for Students with Visual Impairment in an Inclusive Setting

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Abstract

Inclusive education represents a fundamental approach to ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with visual impairment, by integrating them into mainstream classrooms to promote academic and social growth. This paper explores how inclusive education fosters the social skills development of learners with visual impairment in Nigeria, addressing the unique challenges posed by their condition, such as difficulties in interpreting non-verbal cues and navigating interactions, while emphasizing the need for adapted teaching methods, assistive technologies, and supportive environments. Key benefits include enhanced social interactions that build confidence, friendships, and independence; improved academic outcomes through accessible resources; and reduced stigma via peer empathy. The paper examines strategies like role-playing, peer mentoring, social stories, and positive feedback to cultivate communication and teamwork skills, alongside challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited materials in Braille or audio formats, poor infrastructure, and societal discrimination that hinder implementation. In conclusion, inclusive education not only empowers learners with visual impairment to achieve social integration and holistic development but also contributes to a more empathetic society, underscoring its transformative potential despite resource constraints. Recommendations include prioritizing teacher training on inclusive practices, allocating funds for assistive devices and accessible materials, launching anti-stigma campaigns, incorporating social skill-building activities into curricula, improving school accessibility, enforcing policy implementation with monitoring, and encouraging parental and community involvement to support home-based skill reinforcement.

Keywords: Emotional adjustment, students, visual impairment, inclusive setting, and education

Introduction

Inclusive education is a transformative approach that ensures all students, including those with disabilities like visual impairment, learn together in a shared classroom environment. This model promotes equality, embraces diversity, and fosters a sense of belonging by adapting teaching methods and resources to meet varied learner needs (UNESCO, 2020). For students with visual impairment, inclusive education is particularly significant, as it not only facilitates academic progress but also enhances their social skills development, enabling them to interact effectively with peers and participate fully in society (Ajuwon, 2022). By integrating these students into mainstream classrooms, schools create opportunities for them to build confidence, form friendships, and prepare for independent living (Ayine, 2020).

Visual impairment, encompassing conditions from partial sight loss to complete blindness, poses unique challenges for learners, particularly in accessing educational materials and navigating social interactions (WHO, 2024). Emotional adjustment is critical for communication and relationship-building, is often harder to develop for these learners due to difficulties in interpreting non-verbal cues like facial expressions or body language (Ajuwon, 2022). Inclusive education addresses these challenges by providing supportive environments where students with visual impairment can practice social interactions, use assistive technologies, and engage in

collaborative activities with peers (Deppeler, 2020). This approach not only benefits students with visual impairment but also fosters empathy and understanding among their peers, creating a more inclusive society (Mitchell, 2019). Inclusive education and emotional adjustment, this analysis highlights the importance of tailored teaching methods, community involvement, and accessible resources in overcoming barriers faced by students with visual impairment in Nigeria (Okoye & Oboegbulem, 2020). Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions can ensure that these learners achieve both academic success and social integration, preparing them for active participation in their communities.

Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education refers to an educational approach where all students, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or differences, learn together in the same classroom environment. It ensures that every child, including those with physical, intellectual, or social challenges, has equal access to quality education alongside their peers. The goal is to create a learning environment that respects diversity, promotes equality, and fosters a sense of belonging for all students. This approach values every student's unique contribution and ensures that schools are welcoming and supportive spaces for everyone.

The concept of inclusive education is rooted in the belief that education is a fundamental human right. It draws from international frameworks like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Salamanca Statement (1994), which emphasize that every child should have access to education without discrimination. Inclusive education challenges traditional systems that segregate students based on ability, such as special schools or separate classrooms for those with disabilities. Instead, it promotes integration by providing necessary support, like trained teachers, accessible materials, or assistive technologies, to help all students succeed (Ainscow, 2020). For example, a student with visual impairment might use braille resources, while a student with autism might benefit from a structured routine in the same classroom as their peers.

Inclusive education also benefits students without disabilities. When students learn together, they develop empathy, understanding, and respect for differences, which prepares them for life in diverse societies. Research shows that inclusive settings can improve academic outcomes for all students, as teachers use varied teaching strategies that cater to different learning styles (Mitchell, 2019). For instance, using visual aids, group activities, or hands-on learning can help not only students with special needs but also those who learn better through these methods. However, implementing inclusive education requires effort, including teacher training, sufficient funding, and community support to overcome barriers like stigma or lack of resources.

Concept Visual Impairment

Visual impairment is a term that describes problems with a person's eyesight. It means the eyes do not work as well as they should, even after using glasses or contact lenses to help. This can make it hard for someone to see things clearly or at all. Many people with visual impairment can still see some things, but others may not see anything. The World Health Organization (2024) says that visual impairment happens when an eye condition affects how the visual system works and what a person can see. Doctors and experts use this term for any loss of vision that stops someone from doing everyday tasks like reading or walking safely (Resnikoff et al., 2020).

There are different levels of visual impairment. Some people have mild problems where they can see but not very well. Others have severe issues where they can only see light or shapes. The worst level is blindness, which means no vision at all or very little. For example, a person is visually impaired if their better eye has vision worse than 3/60 after correction (WHO, 2024). This measurement comes from eye tests that check how far someone can see letters on a chart. Low vision is another way to talk about moderate to severe visual impairment that makes activities like driving or reading difficult (Gilbert & Foster, 2024). Visual impairment includes blindness but also covers partial sight loss.

Visual impairment can come from many causes. It might happen because of eye diseases like cataracts or glaucoma (Pascolini & Mariotti, 2022). Sometimes, it starts from birth due to problems during pregnancy. Injuries to the eyes or brain can also lead to it. Aging is a big reason too, as older people often lose some vision over time (Bourne et al., 2022). The visual system includes the eyes, nerves, and brain, so if any part does not work right, vision gets impaired. Not all visual impairments can be fixed with surgery or medicine, which is why they last a long time (WHO, 2024). People with visual impairment face challenges in daily life. They may struggle to read books, watch TV, or recognize faces. In school, children with this condition might need special help to learn, like bigger print or audio books (Kapperman, 2021). It can affect jobs too, as some work needs good eyesight. But many people adapt with tools like canes, guide dogs, or screen readers on computers (Adeyinfa et al., 2022). Visual impairment does not mean a person cannot live a full life; it just means they do things differently. Laws in many places define visual impairment to give support, such as in education where it means vision problems that hurt learning even with glasses.

Benefits of Inclusive Education for Learners with Visual Impairment

Inclusive education means teaching all learners, including those with disabilities, in the same classroom. It ensures that every learner gets the same opportunities to learn, play, and grow together (Ogunyemi and Ogbufor, 2020). For students with visual impairment, inclusive education is important because it helps them feel accepted and valued. Instead of being separated, they can study with their friends, share learning experiences, and develop skills that will help them in life (World Health Organization, 2024).

Inclusive education does not only help learners with visual impairment academically, but it also supports their emotional, social, and personal development (Ayine, 2020). It creates an environment where they can learn at their own pace with the right support, such as braille books, audio materials, and assistive devices. Specifically, inclusive education has the following benefits:

- i. Improves Social Skills: When learners with visual impairment study with other students, they interact daily, share ideas, and work together in groups. This helps them to build friendships, learn how to communicate better, and develop teamwork skills (Deppeler, 2020). These skills are important for their future in society.
- ii. Builds Confidence and Self-Esteem: Being included in the same classroom as others makes learners with visual impairment feel that they belong. This gives them confidence and encourages them to participate more in class activities (Ayine, 2020). When they achieve success, their self-esteem grows.
- iii. Improves Academic Achievement: Inclusive classrooms provide equal access to learning materials and teaching methods. With support like braille, large print, or audio, learners with visual impairment can follow lessons and achieve good academic results (UNESCO, 2020).
- iv. Reduces Discrimination and Stigma: When children grow up learning together, they understand and accept each other's differences. This reduces negative attitudes, discrimination, and bullying against learners with visual impairment (World Health Organization, 2024).
- v. Encourages Independence: Inclusive education teaches learners with visual impairment how to solve problems and manage their learning needs independently. They learn to use assistive devices, ask questions, and take responsibility for their education (Deppeler, 2020).
- vi. Prepares Them for the Future: By learning alongside others, learners with visual impairment get used to real-life situations where they will work and live with different people. This prepares them for jobs, higher education, and active participation in the community (Ayine, 2020).

Emotional adjustment for students with Visual Impairment

Social skills are the abilities people use to interact and communicate with others in a good and respectful way. They include speaking politely, listening to others, sharing ideas, making friends, and understanding feelings. For learners with visual impairment in Nigeria, developing these skills is very important because it helps them to live independently, build relationships, and be part of the community (Ajuwon, 2022). Visual impairment can make it harder for learners to see and understand social cues like body language, facial expressions, and gestures. This means they often need extra support and training to learn how to interact effectively with others (World Health Organization, 2024).

In Nigeria, students with visual impairment face many challenges in social skills development. Some of these challenges include lack of access to inclusive education, poor awareness among teachers, and negative attitudes from society (Okoye & Oboegbulem, 2020). When schools do not give proper support, these learners may find it difficult to join group activities, make friends, or participate in discussions. Without these experiences, their social skills may grow more slowly than those of their sighted peers. Teachers and parents need to understand that social skills are learned through practice, and children with visual impairment must be given chances to interact with others in safe and encouraging environments (Ajuwon, 2022).

Electric approach can help learners with visual impairment develop social skills. For example, role-playing activities allow them to practice greetings, asking for help, and starting conversations. Teachers can also use verbal descriptions to explain what other people are doing, so learners understand non-verbal cues (Omolayo & Anyanwu, 2021). In Nigeria, some special schools and inclusive classrooms already use these methods, but more needs to be done to make them common in all schools. Training programs for teachers can make them better prepared to support the social development of students with visual impairment.

Parents also play a big role in helping students with visual impairment to build social skills. At home, they can encourage their children to join family conversations, play with siblings, and take part in community events. This helps them gain confidence in talking to people outside their family (Eze, 2020). Communities can also help by accepting these learners and including them in social, cultural, and religious activities. When society is welcoming, learners with visual impairment feel valued and are more likely to develop strong social skills.

In conclusion, social skills development is very important for students with visual impairment in Nigeria. It helps them to live independently, work with others, and be active members of society. Teachers, parents, and communities must work together to create supportive environments where these learners can practice and improve their social skills. By giving them equal opportunities to interact and learn, Nigeria can ensure that learners with

visual impairment are not left behind in social development (Okoye & Oboegbulem, 2020).

Strategies for Fostering Emotional Adjustment in an Inclusive Setting

Social skills are the abilities people use to communicate, interact, and build relationships with others in a positive way. They help people work well with others, solve problems, and express themselves clearly. For learners, especially those who may face challenges such as disabilities, developing strong social skills is important for success in school and life. Good social skills can help them make friends, take part in group activities, and feel confident in different situations (Gresham, 2021).

Fostering social skills means using planned methods and activities that help learners improve the way they interact with others. Teachers, parents, and caregivers all play an important role in this process. It is not only about teaching learners how to talk or listen but also about helping them understand feelings, respect others, and work as a team. By using different strategies, educators can create a safe and supportive learning environment where learners feel free to express themselves and connect with others (Murray & Pianta, 2020). Some strategies to foster social skills development are described below:

- i. Role-Playing Activities: Role-playing is when learners act out different situations to practice how to respond. For example, they can pretend to meet a new classmate, ask for help politely, or solve a disagreement. This method helps them learn the right words to say, how to use polite body language, and how to understand other people's feelings. It also helps learners build confidence in real-life situations (Bellini & Peters, 2021).
- ii. Peer Mentoring and Group Work: Working in groups or pairs allows learners to practice teamwork, share ideas, and respect other opinions. Peer mentoring means pairing a learner with another student who can guide and support them. This helps learners see positive examples of social behavior and gives them chances to communicate more often. Group activities also encourage sharing responsibilities and learning how to work toward a common goal (Carter et al., 2021).
- iii. Social Stories: Social stories are short, simple descriptions of situations that explain what is expected. They tell learners what might happen, how they might feel, and how they can respond in a good way. For example, a social story about taking turns during games can explain why waiting is important and how it makes everyone happy. This method is especially helpful for learners who need clear guidance about social rules (Gray, 2019).
- iv. Modeling Positive Behavior: Teachers and parents can model, or show, good social behavior in their daily actions. For example, greeting others politely, listening without interrupting, or saying "thank you" when someone helps. Learners often copy what they see adults and peers doing. When adults demonstrate kindness, respect, and patience, learners are more likely to follow these examples.
- v. Providing Positive Feedback: When learners show good social behavior, it is important to recognize and praise it. Positive feedback, such as saying, "You did a great job sharing your toys," encourages learners to repeat that behavior. Feedback should be specific, so learners know exactly what they did is right or wrong. This helps them understand the value of good social interactions and motivates them to keep improving.
- vi. Using Games and Interactive Activities: Games that involve cooperation, taking turns, and following rules can help learners practice social skills in a fun way. Board games, team sports, and classroom challenges are examples. These activities give learners a chance to interact naturally, solve problems together, and enjoy shared success (Kasari et al., 2022).

Challenges of Students Visual Impairment in Inclusive Setting

Inclusive education means that children with and without disabilities learn together in the same school and classroom. For learners with visual impairment, inclusive education gives them the chance to learn with their peers, take part in classroom activities, and develop social and academic skills (Ainscow, 2020). In Nigeria, the idea of inclusive education has been supported by laws and policies, but putting it into practice is still difficult. Many learners with visual impairment still face barriers that make it hard for them to enjoy equal learning opportunities (Eleweke, 2024). These barriers come from lack of resources, poor teacher training, and negative attitudes in the society. In essence, for the purpose of clarity and precision, some of the challenges of inclusive education for student with visual impairment have been highlighted below:

- i. Lack of Learning Materials in Accessible Formats: One major challenge is that many schools do not have enough learning materials in formats that visually impaired learners can use, such as Braille, large print, or audio books (Okoye & Oboegbulem, 2020). Without these resources, it becomes very hard for them to follow lessons or complete assignments. For example, textbooks are often only available in print, and teachers may not have the skill to prepare alternative formats. This makes the learning experience unequal and limits academic success.
- ii. Inadequate Teacher Training: Many teachers in Nigeria are not trained to teach students with visual

impairment. They may not know how to adapt lessons, use assistive devices, or create an inclusive classroom environment (Ajuwon, 2022). As a result, these teachers may unintentionally exclude learners with visual impairment from classroom discussions or activities. Lack of training also means teachers may not understand the emotional and social needs of these learners.

- iii. **Poor School Infrastructure:** The physical structure of many schools in Nigeria is not friendly for students with visual impairment. There are no tactile guides, ramps, or clear signs that help with movement (Eleweke, 2021). Poor classroom arrangement can also make navigation difficult and increase the risk of accidents. For example, chairs and desks may be placed without enough walking space, making it hard for learners with visual impairment to move around safely.
- iv. **Negative Attitudes and Discrimination:** In some communities, people still believe that children with disabilities should not be in regular schools. These negative attitudes can come from teachers, classmates, or even parents (Abosi & Ozoji, 2020). Students with visual impairment may face bullying or be treated as if they cannot learn. Such discrimination can lower their self-esteem and make them withdraw from classroom participation.
- v. **Limited Use of Assistive Technology:** Assistive technologies, such as screen readers, magnifiers, and talking calculators, can help learners with visual impairment access information and complete schoolwork (WHO, 2024). However, in many Nigerian schools, these tools are either too expensive or completely unavailable. Without them, learners are forced to depend heavily on teachers or peers, which can limit their independence and learning speed.
- vi. **Overcrowded Classrooms:** Most of the Nigerian public schools have a large number of students in each class. Overcrowded classrooms make it hard for teachers to give individual attention to learners with visual impairment (Okeke, 2020). In such conditions, the needs of these learners are often overlooked, and they may miss important parts of the lesson.
- vii. **Inconsistent Government Support:** While the Nigerian government had policies that support inclusive education, there are often problems with putting these policies into action (Ajuwon, 2022). Budget allocations for special needs education are sometimes small or not released on time. This affects the purchase of learning materials, training of teachers, and improvement of school infrastructure.

Conclusion

Inclusive education serves as a vital framework for promoting the holistic development of learners with visual impairment, particularly in enhancing their social skills and fostering a sense of belonging within diverse learning environments. By integrating these learners into mainstream classrooms, schools not only address academic needs but also facilitate meaningful social interactions that build empathy, communication, and teamwork abilities among all students. The benefits, including improved self-esteem, reduced stigma, and preparation for real-world participation, underscore the transformative potential of this approach, especially in contexts like Nigeria where challenges such as resource limitations persist. Ultimately, when supported by appropriate strategies and resources, inclusive education empowers student with visual impairment to thrive socially and academically, contributing to more equitable societies.

Inclusive education is not merely a policy but a commitment to human rights and diversity, with profound implications for the social skills development of learners with visual impairment. By embracing inclusive practices, Nigeria and similar contexts can foster environments where these learners develop independence, form lasting relationships, and achieve their full potential, so therefore moving forward, sustained investment and collaboration will be essential to realize the full promise of inclusive education, creating a future where visual impairment does not limit social integration or personal success.

Recommendations

To enhance inclusive education and social skills development for learners with visual impairment in Nigeria, several targeted recommendations are proposed

1. Governments and other stakeholders should prioritize comprehensive training for teachers on inclusive practices, including the use of assistive technologies and adaptive teaching methods for students with visual impairment.
2. Schools must be provided with funding to acquire materials in Braille, audio formats, and large print, alongside assistive devices like screen readers. Partnerships with organizations such as the World Health Organization can help in distributing these resources equitably.
3. Community campaigns and school programs should aim to reduce stigma and discrimination by educating parents, peers, and society about visual impairment.
4. Inclusive classrooms should incorporate regular activities like role-playing, group work, and social stories tailored for students with visual impairment. These programs can be integrated into the curriculum to ensure consistent practice and development of interpersonal skills.

5. Investments in physical accessibility, such as tactile pathways, ramps, and well-arranged classrooms, are essential to support safe navigation and independence for students with visual impairment.
6. Enhance Policy Implementation and Monitoring: The Nigerian government should enforce existing inclusive education policies with adequate budgeting and regular evaluations.
7. Encourage Parental and Community Involvement: Parents should be trained to support social skills at home through family interactions and community events.

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