

Enhancing Teachers' Understanding and Support for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in Ghanaian Second Cycle Educational Institutions

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the understanding and perspectives of teachers regarding students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) within specific second cycle educational institutions in Ghana. Employing a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, data was collected using a questionnaire. Through a multi-stage sampling approach, 400 teachers were selected from a total of 4539 across 95 public second cycle institutions in the Volta region. Out of these, 270 teachers responded to the questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that teachers possessed a high level of awareness about the prevalence of EBD and held positive attitudes towards students with EBD. However, their knowledge regarding internalizing behaviors associated with EBD, such as depression, withdrawal, anxiety, and social phobia, was found to be limited. The focus of most teachers seemed to be directed towards students displaying externalizing behavioral disorders, including traits like hyperactivity, aggression, impulsivity, and vandalism, among others. A significant observation from the study was that teachers with higher educational backgrounds tended to possess more comprehensive knowledge about EBD. As a conclusion, the study highlighted the need for further education and awareness among teachers concerning the internalizing behaviors associated with EBD. It was suggested that the Ministry of Education should develop a comprehensive guide outlining the identification and characteristics of EBD. Additionally, regular in-service training programs should be established to equip teachers with the skills necessary for identifying and supporting students with EBD effectively.

Keywords: Emotional Disorders, Teachers' Understanding, Disabilities and Behavioral Disorders

DOI: 10.7176/JEP/14-28-04

Publication date: October 31st 2023

1. Introduction

One of the major disabilities which have not attracted the attention of researchers is that of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders, (EBD) (Kauffman, Mock, & Simpson, 2011). Emotional and behavioural manifestations of students with EBD have the potential to dramatically affect the overall atmosphere of the teaching process (Cassady, 2011). Allday, Hinkson and Hudson (2012), observe that if students with EBD are included in regular education classroom where teachers are not informed about their characteristics or management, the teachers can be overwhelmed by the challenging behaviours exhibited by these group of students and this may ultimately affect their attitude towards such students.

Fundamentally, two major types of behaviour are exhibited by students with EBD. These are externalising and internalising behaviours. Behaviours that are disinhibited, disruptive, or hostile in nature and defiant are known as externalising behaviours (Lane, Webby & Barton-Arwood, 2005). Students displaying externalising behaviours are usually diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorders. These behavioural disorders often have features like acting out, verbal or physical aggression, destruction of property and vandalism. Individuals with conduct disorders are dangerous because they could become a greater threat to those they interact with (Johnson, 2008). Conversely, internalising behaviours include those that are indicative of anxiety, withdrawal, depression, or social phobia. These behaviours typically result in diagnoses of depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorders, or selective mutism (Gresham & Kern, 2004).

Many teachers perceive students with EBD as problematic and harder to deal with due to insufficient support and training (Ducharme & Shecter, 2011). The results from the study of Oliver and Reschley (2010) reported that teachers may not be adequately prepared to meet the behavioural needs of diverse learners. Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou (2014) noted that several factors affect teachers' attitude towards students with EBD, these include experience, education, personal contact with persons with disability, requirements for accommodations, and potential behaviour problems.

In Ghana, the Inclusive Education Policy (MoE, 2015) makes it binding on regular schools to manage all categories of students including those with EBD professionally. However, according to Hayford, cited in Boakye-Akomeah (2015) most general education teachers in Ghana have little expertise in recognising individuals with special needs. It is observed that the limited knowledge, skills and abilities of some teachers and educators in Ghana tend to make them rather reluctant to manage children with emotional and behavioural problems (Aboagye, 2020). Though several literatures exist on other forms of disabilities such as physical, visual, hearing, intellectual

and learning, that on EBD seems to be limited; this, according to Gage, Lewis and Adamson (2010) could explain the frustrations of most teachers in handling students with EBD. The current study is therefore important as it is geared at identifying the knowledge and attitude of teachers about students with EBD. This will ultimately inform stakeholders about the support needs of students with EBD in the inclusive education system. Based on this, two research questions and five hypotheses were posed to guide the study. Specifically, the study assesses the knowledge teachers in the Volta Region have about students with Emotional and Behaviour Disorders and determine the attitude of teachers in the Volta Region towards students with Emotional and Behaviour Disorders.

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey design to gather data. The focus was on the target population of 4359 teachers from 95 public secondary institutions in the Volta Region of Ghana. The sampling approach involved multiple stages and followed the Slovin's Formula by Yamane (1967). Consequently, 400 teachers were selected for the study. This sample included 267 (66.7%) males and 133 (33.3%) females, proportionally reflecting the gender distribution of the target population. The allocation was then distributed proportionally among 77 schools to ensure fairness in representation. These schools were chosen purposefully based on their larger enrollment numbers, a premise aligned with the notion that larger samples yield more reliable outcomes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The allocation of participants to the 77 schools was computed using the sample proportion, obtained by dividing the total population of 4539 by the sample size of 400, resulting in 8.8% for each school.

To verify the questionnaire's validity, it underwent expert review by professionals specializing in test development within the Department of Education and Psychology at the University of Cape Coast. The insights provided by these experts, such as suggestions for rewording and restructuring, were integrated into the items before data collection. Utilizing a Likert scale, the internal consistency of the items was gauged using Cronbach's Alpha. A pilot test was executed, yielding Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of 0.80 for items gauging knowledge of EBD and teachers' attitudes towards it.

In summary, the research utilized a cross-sectional descriptive survey design to collect data from teachers within the Volta Region of Ghana. The sampling strategy, based on Slovin's Formula, facilitated a representative sample allocation among schools. The questionnaire's content was structured into distinct sections, each serving a specific purpose. Rigorous steps were taken to ensure questionnaire validity, including expert review and pilot testing. The researchers closely managed the questionnaire administration process, including follow-ups when necessary.

Result

Demographic Information of Participants

This section deals with the results of the demographic data of participants.

Table 1: *Distribution of Gender of Respondents*

| Gender of respondents | Frequency (No.) | Percent (%) |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Male | 172 | 63.7 |
| Female | 98 | 36.3 |
| Total | 270 | 100 |

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Table 1 shows that 270 respondents answered the items on the questionnaire. Out of the total number of respondents, 172 (63.7%) were males, while the remaining 98 (36.3%) were females. The results indicate that males dominate the population of teachers in the Volta Region of Ghana where the study was conducted.

Table 2: *Distribution of Ages of Respondents*

| Age range (years) | Frequency (No.) | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 20-29 years | 36 | 13.3 |
| 30-39 years | 100 | 37.0 |
| 40-49 years | 72 | 26.7 |
| 50-59 years | 57 | 21.1 |
| 60 years and above | 5 | 1.9 |
| Total | 270 | 100 |

Table 2 shows that majority (37.0%) of the teachers fall within the age range of 30 - 39 years. In contrast, the minority 5 (1.90%) of them are either 60 years or more. The results in the table make it clear that the youth dominated the teaching population used for the study. This finding makes it evident that the youth in the teaching profession out-number the elderly.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Number of Years of Teaching (Experience)

| Number of years | Frequency (No.) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1-5 years | 36 | 13.3 |
| 6-10 years | 52 | 19.3 |
| 11-15 years | 71 | 26.3 |
| Above 15 years | 111 | 41.1 |
| Total | 270 | 100 |

Table 3 shows that 111 (41.1%) of the teachers have been teaching for over 15 years while 36 (13.3%) of them have spent 1-5 years in the teaching profession. This means that more than half 182 (67.4%) of the respondents have taught for quite a long period of time and can be said to have experience in the teaching field.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by their Educational Background

| Level | Frequency (No.) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Bachelor's Degree | 160 | 59.3 |
| Masters | 108 | 40.0 |
| Diploma/HND | 2 | 0.7 |
| Total | 270 | 100 |

Table 4 shows that more than half 160 (59.3%) of the respondents hold Bachelor's degree certificates. The Table shows that only 2 (.07%) of the respondents have a Diploma/HND. Generally, the teachers seemed to have higher educational backgrounds.

Teachers' Knowledge about Students with Emotional and Behaviour Disorders

In exploring the extent to which respondents are abreast with the nature and symptoms of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders among students, they were asked to choose from a set of alternatives on a 4-point Likert type scale weighted as: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. A midpoint of this was used to determine whether the respondents had good knowledge or not. Thus, $(4+3+2+1 = 10; 10 \div 4 = 2.5)$ if the mean of means falls above the cut-off mean of 2.5, then it is interpreted as adequate or high knowledge, while if it is below 2.5 it is interpreted as inadequate knowledge.

Table 5: The Knowledge of teachers regarding Students with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders.

| Statements | Mean | SD |
|---|------|------|
| Students with EBDs exhibit mood disorder cases. | 3.46 | 0.52 |
| Students with EBDs seem to disturb during instructional times. | 3.37 | 0.56 |
| Students with EBDs experience educational problems which negatively affect their academic achievement. | 3.34 | 0.70 |
| Students with EBDs seem to be hyperactive. | 3.30 | 0.59 |
| Students with EBDs seem to have difficulty adapting to the social environment of the school. | 3.30 | 0.59 |
| Students with EBDs have difficulty complying with the tasks Assigned by their teachers. | 3.25 | 0.58 |
| Some students with EBDs show signs of social withdrawal. | 3.21 | 0.57 |
| Some students with EBDs are perceived to be suffering from schizophrenia (mental illness). | 3.21 | 0.57 |
| Many students with EBDs suffer from anxiety in general | 3.20 | 0.60 |
| Students with EBDs suffer from low self-concept. | 3.17 | 0.63 |
| Students with EBDs tend to break school rules. | 3.15 | 0.66 |
| Most students with EBDs have phobias. | 3.15 | 0.63 |
| One attribute of students with EBDs is distraction. | 3.08 | 0.73 |
| Students with EBDs are aggressive towards their peers. | 3.08 | 0.73 |
| One attribute of students with EBDs is vandalism. | 3.06 | 0.72 |
| Individuals with Attention Deficit and Hyperactive Disorders. (ADHD) cannot sit still long enough to pay attention. | 3.04 | 0.66 |
| If a child who is diagnosed with ADHD is prescribed medication, an educational intervention is not necessary. | 3.03 | 0.66 |
| Students with EBDs are mostly dependent in their interactions with peers. | 3.01 | 0.71 |
| Most students with EBDs seem to have problems paying attention. | 3.00 | 0.90 |
| They suffer from depression. | 2.05 | 0.73 |
| Many students with EBDs have severe impulsive tendencies. | 2.04 | 0.79 |
| Overall Mean | 3.07 | 0.66 |

Findings reveal that teachers have adequate knowledge about EBD. This is due to the fact that the overall mean of 3.07 exceeds the cut-off mean of 2.5. Again, Table 5 shows that out of the 21 items, only two items scored below the cut-off point. This shows that, the majority of the respondents agreed that students with EBD exhibit symptoms of mood disorders. This had a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of .52. Furthermore, the majority of respondents agreed that students with EBD seem to disturb during instructional times, with a mean of 3.37 and standard deviation of 0.56. Again, with a mean of 3.34 and a standard deviation of .70, majority of respondents said that students with EBD experience educational problems which negatively affect their academic achievement. Also, with a mean of 3.30 and a standard deviation of .59, respondents were in agreement that students with EBD seem to be hyperactive and also, have difficulty adapting to the social environment of the school.

On the contrary, majority of teachers disagreed that students with EBD suffer from depression. This is supported by a mean of 2.05 and a standard deviation of .73. In addition, a high number of the respondents disagreed that many students with EBD have severe impulsive tendencies with a mean of 2.04 and a standard deviation of .79.

Further analysis using the independent samples t-test at 0.05 alpha level revealed significant differences exist between male and female teachers with respect to their knowledge about EBD. Details of the results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Comparison of Gender of Teachers and their Knowledge about Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

| Gender | N | Mean | SD | t-value | Df | p-value |
|--------|-----|-------|------|---------|-----|---------|
| Male | 172 | 63.88 | 4.95 | -2.545* | 268 | .011 |
| Female | 98 | 65.50 | 5.13 | | | |

*Significant, $p < .05$

There was a statistically significant difference ($t(268) = -2.545, p = .011$) between male and female respondents with respect to their knowledge of EBD. Therefore, the results show that there is a significant difference in the means of male teachers ($M = 63.88, SD = 4.95$) and female teachers ($M = 65.50, SD = 5.13$) regarding their knowledge on EBD. Based on this finding, the study further sought to investigate if the difference in teachers' knowledge about EBD was based on their level of education. Analysis of the responses is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: One-way ANOVA Test for Teachers' Knowledge on Emotional and Behaviour Disorders based on Educational Background.

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| Between Groups | 205.47 | 2 | 102.74 | 4.091* | .018 |
| Within Groups | 6705.79 | 267 | 25.12 | | |
| Total | 6911.26 | 269 | | | |

*Significant, $p < .05$

From the description as presented in Table 8, the respondents had a mean of 63.88 and a standard deviation of 4.94 for bachelor's degree. Also, respondents had a mean of 65.44 and a standard deviation of 5.13 for master's degree. With the Higher National Diploma (HND), they had a mean of 59.50 and a standard deviation of 2.12. See Table 8 for the details.

Table 8: Descriptive on the knowledge of teachers based on their level of education.

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Minimum | Maximum |
|--------------|-----|---------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| First degree | 160 | 63.8813 | 4.94291 | .39077 | 63.1095 | 64.6530 | 50.00 | 77.00 |
| Masters | 108 | 65.4352 | 5.13058 | .49369 | 64.4565 | 66.4139 | 52.00 | 78.00 |
| Diploma/HND | 2 | 59.5000 | 2.12132 | 1.50000 | 40.4407 | 78.5593 | 58.00 | 61.00 |
| Total | 270 | 64.4704 | 5.06877 | .30848 | 63.8630 | 65.0777 | 50.00 | 78.00 |

To confirm the difference in teachers' knowledge with respect to their educational background, a further test of multiple comparison was conducted using the Tukey HSD test. Table 9 shows the results of the multiple comparison test.

Table 9: Results of Tukey HSD Comparison Test

| Educational background | Educational background | Sig. |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Bachelor's degree | Masters | .036* |
| | Diploma/HND | .437 |
| Masters | Bachelor's degree | .036* |
| | Diploma/HND | .223 |
| Diploma/HND | Bachelor's degree | .437 |
| | Masters | .223 |

*Significant, $p < .05$

From Table 9, the significant difference (.036) lies between only teachers with master's degree and bachelor's degree certificates. Teachers with higher educational background had higher knowledge in EBD than those with lower educational background.

Attitudes of Teachers towards Students with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

This section investigated the attitude teachers portray towards their students with EBD. Table 10 presents the analysis of the results on the attitudes of teachers towards students with EBD.

Table 10: Attitudes of Teachers towards Students with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

| Statements | Mean | SD |
|---|------|-----|
| Students with EBD should be given educational adaptations. | 3.19 | .72 |
| I am concerned that it will be difficult to give appropriate attention to all students in an inclusive classroom. | 3.11 | .71 |
| I believe that inclusion can reinforce self-esteem of students with EBD. | 3.10 | .77 |
| I believe that students with EBD have equal future academic opportunities as typically developed students. | 3.01 | .73 |
| I am concerned that I do not have the knowledge and skills required to teach students with EBD. | 2.96 | .73 |
| Students with EBD can function successfully within the regular classroom. | 2.94 | .68 |
| Teaching students with EBD required too much planning. | 2.87 | .76 |
| I am concerned that teachers would be overburdened. | 2.81 | .76 |
| Having students with EBD is a positive thing. | 2.78 | .66 |
| Students with EBD benefit from being included in the regular class | 2.78 | .78 |
| I feel comfortable working with students with EBD. | 2.75 | .79 |
| They should be graded the same as their peers. | 2.74 | .72 |
| The behaviour of students with EBD sets a bad example for other students. | 2.63 | .77 |
| I can handle students with EBD effectively in my classroom. | 2.62 | .68 |
| I am able to individualised my teaching according to the needs of students with EBD. | 2.62 | .71 |
| I believe that I am able to manage the behaviour of students with EBD in my classroom. | 2.61 | .72 |
| Students with EBD have a negative impact on the learning environment in my classroom. | 2.56 | .73 |
| I do suspend students with EBD from my class. | 2.54 | .91 |
| I have the expertise in managing students with EBD. | 2.48 | .69 |
| I have adequate time to prepare for students with EBD in my classroom. | 2.46 | .81 |
| I feel comfortable working with students with EBD. | 2.44 | .74 |
| They should not be included in the regular classroom. | 2.39 | .92 |
| I enjoy teaching students with EBD. | 2.39 | .78 |
| Overall Mean | 2.72 | .75 |

The results show that, majority of the respondents agreed that students with EBD should be given educational adaptations; this had a mean of 3.19 and a standard deviation of .72. Also, the respondents indicated that they are concerned about the difficulty in giving appropriate attention to all students in an inclusive classroom. This is supported by a mean of 3.11 and a standard deviation of .71. Again, with a mean of 3.10 and a standard deviation of .77, the teachers indicated that they believed inclusion can reinforce self-esteem of students with EBD. Teachers supported the assertion that students with EBD have equal future academic opportunities as typically developed students, with a mean of 3.01 and a standard deviation of .73.

Nevertheless, most of the respondents disagreed with the fact that they have adequate time to prepare for students with EBD in their classroom. This is supported by a mean of 2.46 and a standard deviation of .81. In addition, more than half of the respondents disagreed with the assertion that they feel comfortable working with students with EBD with a mean of 2.44 and a standard deviation of .74. With a mean of 2.39 and a standard deviation of .92, the respondents disagreed that students with EBD should not be included in the regular classroom. In a nutshell teachers have positive attitudes toward students with EBD.

Further, analysis sought to find out whether significant differences exist between male and female teachers with respect to their attitude towards students with emotional and behavioural disorders. The hypothesis was tested using an independent sample t-test at 0.05 alpha level. Details of the results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Comparison of Male and Female Teachers' attitude towards Students with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

| Gender | N | Mean | SD | t-value | Df | p-value |
|--------|-----|-------|------|---------|-----|---------|
| Male | 172 | 62.74 | 6.79 | .023* | 268 | .982 |
| Female | 98 | 62.72 | 6.78 | | | |

The results indicated that there was a statistically non-significant difference ($t(268) = .023, p = .982$) between male ($M = 62.74, SD = 6.79$) and female ($M = 62.72, SD = 6.78$) respondents about their attitude towards students with EBD.

The study further sought to find out if teachers' positive attitudes were influenced by their number of years of teaching. From the data, the respondents had a mean of 61.97 and a standard deviation of 8.72 for those who have taught for one to five years. Further, they had a mean of 63.87 and a standard deviation of 7.78 for those who have taught for six to ten years. Also, the respondents who have taught for eleven to fifteen years had a mean of 62.17 and a standard deviation of 6.01. For those who have spent more than fifteen years in the teaching profession, they had a mean of 62.82 and a standard deviation of 5.99. Table 12 presents descriptive information.

Table 12: Descriptive in teachers' attitudes based on number of years of teaching

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Minimum | Maximum |
|-----------|-----|---------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| 1-5 yrs | 36 | 61.9722 | 8.72267 | 1.45378 | 59.0209 | 64.9235 | 49.00 | 91.00 |
| 6-10 yrs | 52 | 63.8654 | 7.78140 | 1.07909 | 61.6990 | 66.0317 | 46.00 | 80.00 |
| 11-15 yrs | 71 | 62.1690 | 6.00948 | .71319 | 60.7466 | 63.5914 | 49.00 | 72.00 |
| 15 above | 111 | 62.8198 | 5.99424 | .56895 | 61.6923 | 63.9473 | 50.00 | 77.00 |
| Total | 270 | 62.7370 | 6.77364 | .41223 | 61.9254 | 63.5486 | 46.00 | 91.00 |

Table 13 shows the results of the One-way ANOVA of teachers' Attitude towards students with EBD based on their number of years of teaching.

Table 13: One-way ANOVA of Teachers' Attitude towards students with EBD based on their Number of Years of Teaching

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|
| Between Groups | 110.93 | 3 | 36.977 | .804 | .493 |
| Within Groups | 12231.40 | 266 | 45.983 | | |
| Total | 12342.33 | 269 | | | |

The result from Table 13 shows a statistically non-significant mean difference $F(3, 266) = .804, p = .493$ in teachers' attitude based on years of teaching. In conclusion, the results of the one-way ANOVA supported the null hypothesis that there are no differences in the mean scores of teachers' attitude with respect to the number of years of teaching experience. The Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficient was used to test if there is a statistically significant relationship between the knowledge of teacher respondents and their attitudes towards students with emotional and behavioural disorders. For a better understanding of the relationship between the two variables, the direction and degree of their relationship were also indicated. Both variables were continuous and therefore the assumptions of the statistical tool adopted were not violated. Refer to Table 14 for the details.

Table 14: Knowledge of Teachers on Emotional and Behavioural Disorders and their Attitude towards such Students

| Variables | | Knowledge | Attitude |
|-----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Knowledge | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .176** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .004 |
| | N | 270 | 270 |
| Attitude | Pearson Correlation | .176** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .004 | |
| | N | 270 | 270 |

**Significant, $p < 0.01$; $R^2 = .03$ (3.0%).

The results from Table 14 show a weak statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' knowledge and their attitude towards students with emotional behavioural disorders ($r = .176; n = 270; p > 0.004$). This implies that knowledge of teachers on students with EBD significantly relates to their attitude towards them. The positive relationship implies that teachers with adequate knowledge about students with emotional and behavioural disorders will have a high (positive) attitude towards students with emotional and behavioural disorders in the classroom. The coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.03. This means that teachers' knowledge about students with emotional and behavioural disorders explains only 3.0 % of variation in their attitude towards such students in their classrooms. The remaining percentages may be due to unknown factors.

4. Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to evaluate teachers' knowledge and attitude about students with emotional and behaviour disorders. The following discussions are based on the findings of the study. The result indicates that general education teachers had adequate knowledge of EBD. However, their knowledge on internalising behaviours of students with EBD such as depression withdrawal, anxiety or social phobia. Teachers' low level of knowledge on internalising behaviour of students as found from the study is consistent with that of Stebing (2016) who found that teachers in secondary schools in Indiana did not have adequate knowledge of EBD and felt they

are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of students with internalising disorders. Again, these results differ from the results of other studies conducted on teachers' knowledge on the characteristics of students with EBDs. For instance, it was found in the studies by Saun (2008) and Manning, Bullock, and Gable (2009) that general education teachers had little knowledge of EBD. Teachers were reported by Broomhead (2013) and Conley, Marchant, and Caldarella (2014) to have little knowledge of EBD. The considerable adequate knowledge of teachers on EBD found in this study could be explained to be due to the level of education of the teachers. A significant difference ($p = 0.018$) in teachers' knowledge level on the characteristics of students with EBD based on their educational background was found in the study. This showed that teachers with higher educational background had higher knowledge in EBD than those with lower educational background. It was further noted that it is the exposure of the teacher to general special education courses during their programmes of study in universities that influences their knowledge level on EBD. This supports Zimmerman's (2006) findings that teachers who had formal college courses in special education had adequate knowledge of students with special educational needs and disabilities and were more likely to agree they were prepared to teach students with EBD.

Variation in teachers' knowledge about EBD based on their gender was found in the study. The difference observed is statistically significant ($p = 0.011$) between male and female teachers' knowledge on EBD. Thus, the study concludes that the knowledge level of female teachers on EBD is significantly higher than that of male teachers. The finding is consistent with Zimmerman (2006) and Abaoud and Almalki (2015) that male teachers felt less confident in handling students with EBD than female teachers. However, what was unclear from the study is whether the high knowledge level of women on EBD is associated with their empathetic nature. This is because, according to Stengel (2016), women are more caring than men and that, in general, women are more altruistic and empathetic.

Concerning teachers' attitude toward students with EBD, the results of the study indicated they had positive attitudes. Holley (2015) also found teachers' attitude to be positive towards inclusion of students with disabilities, especially those with EBD. This is, however, contrary to Adera and Bullock (2010) and Gyimah's (2006) study which found regular teachers to be least tolerant of the behaviour and placement of children with EBD in their classrooms, compared to children with other disabilities such as intellectually or physically disabled. Holley (2015) also found teachers' attitude to be positive towards inclusion of students with disabilities, especially those with EBD. This, therefore, has implications for inclusion of students with EBD in the mainstream schools, considering the assertion of Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou (2014) that contextually, the inclusion of students with EBD in mainstream schools is largely dependent on the attitude of teachers.

The study found no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards students with EBD based on their gender. Unlike the case where females displayed higher knowledge than the males, they all seem to share similar opinions when it comes to their attitudes. This finding confirms Chhabra, Srivastava, and Srivastava's (2010) study which also found no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards students with EBD based on gender. Similarly, Wan and Huang (2005) found no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards students with EBD with respect to gender.

This finding is inconsistent with Abaoud, and Almalki (2015) who found significant differences in female and male teachers' attitude and perceptions about students with EBD. They found female teachers to have high positive attitude than male teachers. It was equally my expectation that having found female teachers having higher knowledge, the same would have reflected in their attitudes. Again, the findings of this study debunk Dukmak's (2013) finding that male teachers had more supportive attitude towards students with EBD than females.

There were no significant differences ($p = 0.493$) in teachers' attitude towards students with EBD based on years of teaching. The results imply that the number of years of teaching has no significant effect on the attitude of teachers towards students with EBD. The non-significant result in teachers' attitude towards students with EBD with respect to number of years of teaching could be linked to the non-significant relationship found between teaching experience and knowledge level on EBD. However, the results contradict Anastasiadou (2016) who found that teachers with fewer years of working experience have a more positive attitude than those with more years.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that general education teachers in second cycle institutions in this study have considerable adequate knowledge on EBD. Teachers with higher educational background have higher knowledge about EBD as compared those with lower educational backgrounds. Teachers generally have positive attitude toward students with EBD which is not dependent on their gender. Finally, the study established that there are many more forms of internalising behaviours of EBD such as depression, withdrawal, anxiety, or social phobia that teachers have low knowledge of. Most teachers only focus on students who exhibit externalising behaviour disorders such as hyperactivity, aggression, impulsivity, and vandalism, among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, several recommendations are put forward to guide

policy-making and practical actions: Regular In-Service Training for Teachers: Initiate regular in-service training programs aimed at enhancing teachers' ability to identify and manage students with EBD. These training sessions should provide teachers with effective strategies for recognizing and supporting these students in the classroom. Integration in Teacher Training Curriculum: Collaborate with stakeholders in education to integrate the identification and understanding of students with EBD into the curricula of universities and colleges that provide teacher training. This will ensure that future educators are well-prepared to handle students with diverse needs. In summary, these recommendations aim to enhance teacher preparedness, improve support systems, and increase awareness about students with EBD. By implementing these suggestions, policymakers and educators can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for all students.

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