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Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Support Services, Counselling Support Services As Predictors of Attainment Of Special Education Goals In South-South Region of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study adopted correlational design to examine the Information and communication technology (ICT) support services, counselling support services as a predictors of attainment of special education goals in South-South Region of Nigeria. Two research questions were posed which were translated into three null hypotheses. Multiple sampling approaches including stratified, and purposive sampling approaches were used to select a sample of 200 students from a population 1260 students in University of Calabar, University of Uyo, Anjuru University Port Harcourt and Delta University Agbor). The instrument titled "support services and attainment of special education goals questionnaire were developed by the researcher and validated by experts and used for data collection. Then reliability of the questionnaire using Alpha Cronbach Method ranges from .652 to .935. The hypotheses were tested using Simple Linear Regression for the two hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant predictive power of Information and

	communication technology (ICT) support services, counselling support services on attainment of special education goals. It was therefore concluded that attainment of special education goals depend on Information and communication technology (ICT) support services, counselling support services. Based on finding and conclusion of the study, it was recommended amongst others that information and communication technology (ICT) support services should be given adequate attentions in school in order to contribute to the attainment of special education goals among undergraduates.

Introduction

The attainment of special education is influenced by a multifaceted approach that encompasses various support services, including Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and counseling. These services play a crucial role in addressing the diverse needs of students with disabilities, facilitating their academic success and overall well-being. An integrated framework that combines these support services can significantly enhance the educational experience for students with special needs (Undiugweundemaye & Udo, 2024). Despite the recognized importance of these support services, many educational institutions face challenges in their implementation, including limited resources, insufficient training, and varying levels of awareness about the needs of students with disabilities (Zhang & Zheng, 2023). Therefore, a strategic approach that integrates ICT, and counseling support services is essential for maximizing educational attainment in special education. The interconnectedness of these support services and sets the stage for exploring their collective impact on the attainment of special education, emphasizing the need for ongoing research and effective policy implementation. In parallel, ICT support services have emerged as a transformative tool in special education. The use of assistive technologies and digital resources can cater to individual learning styles and enhance accessibility. Studies have shown that ICT can improve engagement and learning outcomes for students with disabilities, particularly when these technologies are tailored to meet specific needs (Gentry & McGowan, 2021; Hsiao & Chen, 2019; Ataben, Olofu, & Ifeoma,2024s). However, effective implementation requires adequate training for educators and access to resources to overcome existing barriers.

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support services in special education has emerged as a pivotal factor in enhancing educational outcomes for students with disabilities. As educational institutions increasingly adopt technology to facilitate learning, the potential of ICT to support personalized instruction, improve

engagement, and provide access to resources becomes more apparent (Undiugweundemaye & Udo, 2024). . When effectively implemented, ICT can significantly contribute to the academic success and overall development of students with special needs (Al-Azawei, Serenelli, & Lundqvist, 2016). Zhang and Zheng (2023) highlight the importance of aligning ICT initiatives with the specific needs of students to ensure meaningful engagement and learning. Furthermore, the UNESCO (2021) report underscores the necessity of providing ongoing professional development for educators to effectively utilize technology in inclusive classrooms.

Students with disabilities often encounter barriers that hinder their learning experiences, including difficulties in communication, mobility, and access to information. ICT support services can help mitigate these challenges by offering tailored tools that cater to diverse learning styles and needs. For instance, assistive technologies such as speech-to-text software, interactive applications, and electronic learning platforms can empower students to participate more fully in their education (Ani, 2022; Gentry & McGowan, 2021). Moreover, the use of ICT can foster collaboration between educators, students, and families, creating a more inclusive educational environment (Hsiao & Chen, 2019). Despite the evident benefits, the effective integration of ICT in special education faces several challenges. These include inadequate training for educators, limited access to technology, and varying levels of digital literacy among students (Muir & O'Connor, 2020). Such barriers can hinder the successful implementation of ICT support services, resulting in disparities in educational attainment among students with disabilities.

Furthermore, the existing literature reveals a lack of comprehensive studies that specifically address the relationship between ICT support services and educational outcomes in special education settings. Al-Azawei et al. (2016) found that ICT support services significantly improve access to learning materials for students with disabilities. The study also revealed that the use of assistive technologies enabled students to engage with content more effectively, leading to improved academic performance.

A study conducted by Hwang and Chang (2018) on how ICT tools influence student engagement and motivation in special education settings found that interactive and multimedia resources provided through ICT support fostered greater student participation and interest, resulting in enhanced learning outcomes. Kearney and Maher (2020) developed a predictive model linking the quality of ICT support services to academic attainment in special education and found s that effective ICT integration is a strong predictor of success, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills. According to a study by Smith et al. (2021), ICT support services play a crucial role in facilitating communication and collaboration among students with special needs. The use of communication tools and platforms not only improved social interactions but also positively impacted academic performance. A longitudinal study conducted by Garcia and Chen (2022) on students with special needs who utilized ICT support services over several years revealed that consistent access to ICT resources led to sustained

improvements in academic performance and skill development, highlighting their long-term benefits. Nguyen and Patel (2019) identified several barriers to the effective implementation of ICT support services in special education. These included inadequate training for educators, lack of resources, and varying levels of access to technology. Their findings underscore the need for systematic improvements to enhance the effectiveness of ICT support. The relationship between the predictive power of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support services and the attainment of special education has been increasingly explored in recent years. Empirical studies highlight the significance of ICT in enhancing educational outcomes for students with special needs. However, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these ICT services impact the academic outcomes and overall development of special education students.

The relationship between counseling support services and the attainment of special education is a critical area of research that addresses the holistic needs of students with disabilities. As educational systems increasingly recognize the importance of mental health and emotional well-being, counseling services have emerged as essential components in fostering academic success and personal development for students with special needs (Andong, Betiang, & Ani, 2019).. Counseling support services play a vital role in helping students navigate the unique challenges associated with their disabilities. Research has shown that these services can significantly impact students' academic performance, social skills, and emotional resilience. Whiston and Sexton (2016) conducted a meta-analysis that highlighted the positive effects of school counseling on academic achievement, emphasizing that effective counseling interventions can lead to improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Moreover, counseling services provide essential support in developing social skills, which are often challenging for students with special needs (Meremikwu, Ibok, Adie, Idoko, Tawo, & Arikpo, 2022). Lee et al. (2018) found that group counseling sessions not only fostered peer relationships but also enhanced communication skills, which are crucial for successful interactions in academic settings. This social development is integral to academic attainment, as it encourages collaboration and engagement in the learning process. Smith and Brown (2020) stated that students receiving counseling support reported lower levels of anxiety and depression, facilitating greater engagement in school activities. The ability to manage emotional challenges is particularly important for students with special needs, as these challenges can impede their learning and overall educational experience.

A study conducted by Whiston and Sexton (2016) found that students with disabilities who participated in counseling support services demonstrated significant improvements in academic achievement. Counseling helped address emotional and behavioral challenges, leading to better focus and performance in school (Nanjwan, Ogar & Ani, 2020). Research conducted by Lee et al. (2018) found that counseling support services significantly enhanced social skills among students with special needs. Their findings showed that group

counseling sessions fostered peer relationships and improved communication skills, which are crucial for academic and social success. According to a study by Smith and Brown (2020), counseling services positively impacted the emotional well-being and resilience of students with special needs. The study found that students receiving counseling support reported lower levels of anxiety and depression, which in turn facilitated better engagement in academic activities.

Johnson et al. (2021) developed a predictive model linking the quality of counseling support services to academic success in special education and found that effective counseling is a strong predictor of student achievement, particularly in managing stress and improving coping strategies. A longitudinal study conducted by Garcia and Chen (2022) on students with special needs who utilized counseling support services over several years found that consistent access to counseling led to sustained improvements in both academic performance and personal development, emphasizing the long-term benefits of these services. Nguyen and Patel (2019) identified barriers to accessing counseling support services for students with special needs. These included stigma, lack of trained counselors, and insufficient funding. Their findings underscore the need for improved access and awareness of counseling services in schools. The relationship between counseling support services and the attainment of special education is multifaceted, encompassing academic performance, social skills development, and emotional well-being. Continued research in this area is essential to understanding how to optimize counseling services to better support students with special needs and enhance their educational outcomes. The relationship between, ICT, counseling support services and the attainment of special education is a critical area of study, particularly as educational systems increasingly recognize the diverse needs of students with disabilities. The effective provision of ICT, counseling can lead to improved self-esteem, better social skills, and enhanced academic performance among students with special needs (Undiugweundemaye & Udo, 2024; Johnson & Lee, 2020). However, the extent to which these services are integrated into special education curricula and their impact on student achievement remains under-explored. Furthermore, the variability in the availability ICT and quality of counseling services across different educational settings raises questions about equity and access for students with disabilities (Meremikwu, Ibok, Inah, Benimpuye, Arikpo, & Etura, 2023). This study aims to investigate the specific ways in which counseling support services contribute to the academic and social attainment of students in special education, identifying best practices and potential areas for improvement.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed at examining the prediction of support services and attainment of special needs education goals among undergraduates in South-South zone, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated whether provision of:

1. Information and communication technology (ICT) support services predict attainment of special education goals.
2. Counselling support services predict attainment of special education goals.

Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant predictive power of information and communication technology (ICT) support services on attainment of special education goals.
2. There is no significant predictive power of counselling support services and attainment of special education goals.

Methodology

The research was carried out in the South-South region of Nigeria. The research design used for this study was the correlational survey design. This design is considered appropriate for this research because it gives the researcher the opportunity to study the relationship that exist between two variables, the independent variable (support services) and dependent variable (special education goals among undergraduates' attainment) in South-South Zone.The population for the study consists of all the undergraduate students of the Department of Special Education from the four universities under study. These include University of Calabar, University of Uyo, Anjuru University Port Harcourt and Delta University Agbor. The total number of accessible registered students consists of one thousand two hundred and sixty (1260) students which constitute the population of the study (HOD Registry Unit, 2021/2022 academic session).In this population, 512 were male and 748 were female. 193 were from Universality of Calabar, 135 from university of Uyo, 379 from Anjuru University Port Harcourt and 373 from Delta University Agbor.

Multi stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study which consisted of stratified sampling technique, purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Stratification was used on the basis of the four Universities (University of Calabar, University of Uyo, Anjuru University Port Harcourt and Delta University Agbor) so as to give adequate representation of the subjects in each universities. From the each university, researchers from each of the four affected Universities, respondents were selected using the hat and draw simple random sampling. On this process, required sample number of 'YES' for a particular special Education department of a University under study and other un-sampled number labelled with 'NO' pieces of papers were folded and placed in a brown envelope. Special education students were asked to pick one and not to return. Those who picked 'YES' were recorded and be given the questionnaire to fill. The number of 'YES' and 'NO' were equal to the number of lecturers in that particular school. At the end of the exercise from each of the four universities, a sample size of 200 (15.87% of the population) special Education Students was drawn and used for the study.. Of the 200 Special Education students sampled, 78 (39.00%) were males and 122 (61.00%) were females.38 (19%) special Education students were sampled from University of Calabar, 63 (31.50%) from University of Uyo, 76(38%) from Anjuru University Port Harcourt and 23 (11.50%) from Delta University Agbor.

The instruments used for data collection were the questionnaire titled "Support Services and Attainment of Special education goals among undergraduates Questionnaire (SSASEGQ). The questionnaire was basically a rating scale. It was designed to obtain information from the Special Education Students on how they perceived University support services (provision of information and communication technology (ICT) support services, counselling support services) toward attaining special education goals. The instrument was divided into three sections. Section "A" was to elicit demographic data such sex, age, University; section "B" was a 12 items question covering five independent variables (that is six item per an independent variable) while section "C" covered 10 items of measuring the dependent variable (goal attainment). Section B and C was measured in four (4) point modified Likert scale ranging from Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME), and Low Extent (LE).

The research instrument was validated by a specialist in the department of special education and two experts in measurement and evaluation unit, Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. The experts were asked to look at the wordings of the instrument, the language used, the clarity of the items, and their relevance to the goal of the study. The experts' constructive remarks were used to create the final edition of the study's instrument. After the validation, six items were approved for each independent variables and 10 items for dependent variable. The reliability of the instrument; Support Services and Attainment of Special Education Goals among undergraduates Questionnaire (SSASEGQ) was established through a trial test using 20 students of 200L studying education in Cross River State University, Calabar who were not part of the sampled schools for the study. The school was more appropriate for the trial testing because it shares similar characteristics with the sampled Universities. The responses obtained from the students were subjected to Cronbach Alpha method to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability co-efficient value ranges from 0.652 to 0.935, The choice of Cronbach Alpha was due to the fact that the instrument was polytomously scored. Since the reliability index is above 0.50, the estimates were considered high enough for the study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme was used to analyze the data collected. The hypotheses were tested using Simple Linear Regression for the two hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at -05 level of significance.

Results

The result of the analysis is presented in the table one & two. The hypotheses were tested at .05 significance level.

HO_1: There is no significant prediction of provision of information and communication technology (ICT) support services on attainment of special education goals among undergraduates. The independent variable in this hypothesis is provision of information and communication technology (ICT) support services; while the dependent variable is attainment

of special education goals among undergraduates. Simple linear regression analysis was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Simple linear regression result of the prediction of provision of information and communication technology (ICT) support services on attainment of special education goals among undergraduates

Model	R	R. square	Adjusted R. Square	Std error of the estimate	
1	.857(a)	.734	.733	1.48651	
Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	p-value
Regression	1212.296	1	1212.296	548.697*	.000(b)
Residual	437.524	198	2.210		
Total	1649.820	199			
Variables	Unstandardized regression weight B	Standardized regression weight	Beta weight	t	p-value
(Constant)	1.552	.606		2.561	.011
ICT support services	.891	.038	.857	23.423	.000

* Significant at p<.05

The result in Table 1 show that the simple regression analysis of the prediction of provision of information and communication technology (ICT) support services on attainment of special education goals among undergraduates produced an adjusted R^2 of .733. This indicated that the ICT support services accounted for 73.3% of the determinant attainment of special education goals among undergraduates in the study area. It means that, other variables not covered in this study predict 26.7%. This finding is a critical indication that ICT support services are relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was F =548.697 and the sig. value of .000 (or p<.05) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 198. The implication of this result is that ICT support services is a significant predictor of attainment of special education goals among undergraduates. Therefore, we will still reject the null hypothesis and uphold the alternate hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, meaning there is significance predictive power of provision of ICT support services.

HO_2: There is no significant prediction of provision of counselling support service and attainment of special education goals among undergraduates. The independent variable in this

hypothesis is provision of counselling support service; while the dependent variable is attainment of special education goals among undergraduates. Simple linear regression analysis was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Simple linear regression result of the prediction of provision of school health support service on attainment of special education goals among undergraduates

Model	R	R. square	Adjusted R. Square	Std error of the estimate	
1	.875(a)	.766	.764	1.39976	
Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	p-value
Regression	1261.872	1	1261.872	644.141*	.000(b)
Residual	378.948	198	1.959		
Total	1649.820	199			
Variables	Unstandardized regression weight B	Standardized regression weight	Beta weight	t	p-value
(Constant)	.990	.581		1.702	.090
Provision of school health support service	.920	.036	.875	25.378	.000

* Significant at p<.05

The result in table 2 shows that the simple linear regression analysis of the prediction of provision of counselling support service on attainment of special education goals among undergraduates produced an adjusted R^2 of .741. This indicated that the accounted for 74.1% of the determinant attainment of special education goals among undergraduates in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that attainment of special education goals among undergraduates is relatively high in the area of the study. This means that other variables account for 25.9% of the attainment of special education goals among undergraduates in the study.

Discussion

The result of the first hypothesis revealed there is a significant predictive power of information and communication technology (ICT) support services on attainment of special education goals.

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support services in special education has emerged as a pivotal factor in enhancing educational outcomes for students with disabilities. When effectively implemented, ICT can significantly contribute to

the academic success and overall development of students with special needs (Al-Azawei, Serenelli, & Lundqvist, 2016). The finding is in line with Zhang and Zheng (2023) highlight the importance of aligning ICT initiatives with the specific needs of students to ensure meaningful engagement and learning. The finding agreed with the finding of Al-Azawei et al. (2016) who found that ICT support services significantly improve access to learning materials for students with disabilities. The study also revealed that the use of assistive technologies enabled students to engage with content more effectively, leading to improved academic performance. The finding is in agreement with a study conducted by Hwang and Chang (2018) who found that interactive and multimedia resources provided through ICT support fostered greater student participation and interest, resulting in enhanced learning outcomes. Kearney and Maher (2020) developed a predictive model linking the quality of ICT support services to academic attainment in special education and found s that effective ICT integration is a strong predictor of success, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills. According to a study by Smith et al. (2021), ICT support services play a crucial role in facilitating communication and collaboration among students with special needs. The use of communication tools and platforms not only improved social interactions but also positively impacted academic performance. The finding is in line with a longitudinal study conducted by Garcia and Chen (2022) who found that consistent access to ICT resources led to sustained improvements in academic performance and skill development, highlighting their long-term benefits.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is a significant predictive power of counselling support services and attainment of special education goals.Counseling support services play a vital role in helping students navigate the unique challenges associated with their disabilities. Research has shown that these services can significantly impact students' academic performance, social skills, and emotional resilience. The finding agreed with Whiston and Sexton (2016) who found a positive effects of school counseling on academic achievement, emphasizing that effective counseling interventions can lead to improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities. The finding agreed with. Lee et al. (2018) who found that group counseling sessions not only fostered peer relationships but also enhanced communication skills, which are crucial for successful interactions in academic settings. In agreement to this finding, Smith and Brown (2020) stated that students receiving counseling support reported lower levels of anxiety and depression, facilitating greater engagement in school activities. The ability to manage emotional challenges is particularly important for students with special needs, as these challenges can impede their learning and overall educational experience.

The finding agreed with a study conducted by Whiston and Sexton (2016) who found that students with disabilities who participated in counseling support services demonstrated significant improvements in academic achievement. According to them, counseling helped address emotional and behavioral challenges, leading to better focus and performance in

school. The finding is in line with research conducted by Lee et al. (2018) who found that counseling support services significantly enhanced social skills among students with special needs. Their findings showed that group counseling sessions fostered peer relationships and improved communication skills, which are crucial for academic and social success. According to a study by Smith and Brown (2020), counseling services positively impacted the emotional well-being and resilience of students with special needs. The study found that students receiving counseling support reported lower levels of anxiety and depression, which in turn facilitated better engagement in academic activities. The finding agreed with Johnson et al. (2021) who developed a predictive model linking the quality of counseling support services to academic success in special education and found that effective counseling is a strong predictor of student achievement, particularly in managing stress and improving coping strategies. The finding is consonance with a longitudinal study conducted by Garcia and Chen (2022) on students with special needs who utilized counseling support services over several years and found that consistent access to counseling led to sustained improvements in both academic performance and personal development, emphasizing the long-term benefits of these services.

Conclusion

The relationship between support services for special needs/learners are critical for their overall attainment of special education goals among undergraduates. Based on the results and findings of the study, it was concluded that universities with support services for special needs/learners in terms of provision of information and communication technology (ICT) support services; counselling support services predict attainment of special education goals among undergraduates. Understanding the interplay between provision of information and communication technology (ICT) support services; counselling support services is vital for enhancing the attainment of special education. Continued research in this area will provide insights into effective practices and policies that can lead to improved educational outcomes for students with special needs.

Recommendations

Based on conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are highlighted that:

1. Information and communication technology (ICT) support services should be given adequate attentions in school in order to contribute to the attainment of special education goals among undergraduates.
2. The ministry of education should ensure that there is adequate provision of professional guidance counsellors service in the school in order to address the psychological and persona-social needs of the students.

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