

# AVAILABILITY AND USE OF LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES FOR PUPILS WITH DYSLEXIA IN GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE SPECIAL SCHOOL, LAFIA, NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

Dyslexia, a specific learning disability affecting reading, spelling and phonological processing remains under-recognized and under-supported in many Nigerian special education settings. This study assessed the availability and use of learning support services for pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study specifically identified available learning support services, determined the frequency of their use, examined factors affecting utilization and assessed challenges teachers face in service provision. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The total population for this study was 28 teachers. Census sampling technique was used to sample the entire population for the study. A 25-item structured questionnaire was used to collect data and analyzed using mean scores with a criterion mean of 2.50 for acceptance. Findings revealed limited availability of specialized learning support services for dyslexia with only basic accommodations like extra time during assignments and simplified worksheets being available. Frequency of use of available services was low due to multiple barriers. The findings revealed that inadequate teacher training in dyslexia-specific interventions, lack of appropriate instructional materials and insufficient funding were the major factors affecting use of learning support services. Key challenges identified were limited assistive technology and absence of screening and assessment tools for early identification of dyslexia. The study concluded that without targeted interventions and resources, pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia will continue to experience barriers to effective learning. It was recommended that school administrators should prioritize the establishment of a dyslexia screening and assessment unit in the primary school section. Nasarawa State Ministry of Education should institutionalize regular training and professional development workshops for teachers.

**Keywords:** Availability, Use, Learning Support Services, Dyslexia, Pupils

## Introduction

Dyslexia is one of the most prevalent specific learning disabilities affecting children worldwide, yet it remains one of the most misunderstood and inadequately addressed conditions in Nigerian educational settings. The International Dyslexia Association (2025) stated that dyslexia is a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed or both and vary depending on the orthography. These difficulties occur along a continuum of severity and persist even with instruction that is effective for the individual's peers. The causes of dyslexia are complex and involve combinations of genetic, neurobiological, and environmental influences that interact throughout development. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities. Bello et al. (2023) noted that many middle basic school teachers in Nigeria are not aware of and lack adequate management strategies for dyslexia among pupils, highlighting a critical gap in service delivery.

Pupils with dyslexia require specialized learning support services to access the curriculum effectively. According to Farag et al. (2023), these services could include the use of assistive devices, phonological awareness training, multimodal teaching methods and structured literacy education. Fonyuyshey and Nsah 2019 Fonyuyshey and Nsah highlighted that to manage dyslexia effectively in the classroom, teachers need tools and strategies tailored to the individual learning profiles of their students. However, these services are either missing or underutilized in a large number of Nigerian schools including special schools.

Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia, established in 2018 is a specialized institution with three main streams: Deaf, Blind and Learning Disability. The school was designed to provide comprehensive educational services to children with various disabilities, including those with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia. However, observations have shown that the school has encountered difficulties in providing services like resource limitations and administrative problems. The accessibility and caliber of learning support programmes for pupils with dyslexia may be affected by these difficulties.

The concept of learning support services encompasses a range of interventions designed to assist pupils with special educational needs to achieve their full potential. Olatunbosun et al. (2025) stated that assistive technologies, special educators, counselling services and visual aids are examples of support systems for pupils with learning difficulties. According to Olatunbosun et al. (2025), there are still significant gaps especially when it comes to the availability of specialized technology. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of teachers in offering learning support services. According to Hiscock et al. (2020), teachers' understanding of dyslexia significantly affects their ability to provide appropriate support. Pupils with dyslexia may be mistakenly labelled as lazy or unintelligent by teachers who lack understanding and training which can cause frustration, disengagement and subpar academic results. Wadlington and Wadlington (2005) discovered that teachers' classroom practices and readiness to use supportive interventions are influenced by their true beliefs about dyslexia. In order to provide teachers with sufficient knowledge of dyslexia management techniques, Bello et al. (2023) suggested that special education be made a required course in teacher education programmes in Nigeria.

Despite the recognized importance of learning support services, their availability and use in many Nigerian special schools remain underexplored. Sadiku et al. (2024) identified barriers such as limited funding, inadequate teacher training and lack of infrastructure. These challenges are likely to affect pupils with dyslexia regardless of their location. The need for this study is further underscored by recent advocacy efforts. Insufficient funding and weak policies remain major barriers confronting families raising children with additional needs including those with dyslexia. This study, therefore, seeks to fill the gap in empirical research

on learning support services for pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite growing recognition of dyslexia as a specific learning disability requiring specialized interventions, the availability and use of learning support services for pupils with dyslexia remain limited in many Nigerian special schools. Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia, was established in 2018 to provide comprehensive educational services to children with various disabilities, yet evidence suggests that pupils with dyslexia may not be receiving adequate support due to administrative challenges and resource constraints. A major barrier to effective service delivery is the lack of teacher training in dyslexia-specific interventions, as most teachers are not aware of and lack adequate management strategies for dyslexia. Without proper training, teachers cannot identify pupils with dyslexia, implement appropriate instructional strategies, or utilize available learning support services effectively. Furthermore, limited empirical research exists on the availability and use of learning support services for pupils with dyslexia in Nasarawa State specifically.

What remains unknown is the actual state of learning support services in this school six years after its establishment, the specific factors that hinder their utilization, and the practical challenges teachers encounter daily. This gap matters because without empirical data, policymakers and school administrators cannot design targeted interventions or allocate resources effectively. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by systematically documenting the availability and frequency of use of learning support services for pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia, examining the factors affecting utilization, identifying the specific challenges teachers face in service provision and generating evidence-based recommendations tailored to the local context.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general aim of this study was to assess the availability and use of learning support services for pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of study sought to:

1. identify the types of learning support services available for pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia.
2. determine the frequency of use of available learning support services by pupils with dyslexia in the school.
3. examine the factors affecting the use of learning support services for pupils with dyslexia.
4. assess the challenges teachers face in providing learning support services to pupils with dyslexia in the school.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the types of learning support services available for pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia?
2. How frequent is the use of available learning support services by pupils with dyslexia in the school?
3. What factors affect the use of learning support services for pupils with dyslexia?
4. What challenges do teachers face in providing learning support services to pupils with dyslexia in the school?

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The choice of this design was informed by the nature of the study, which sought to gather and analyze data on existing practices, availability of services, and teacher perspectives regarding learning support for pupils with dyslexia without manipulating any variables.

The target population comprised 28 teachers in the primary school section of Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia, who are directly involved in teaching pupils with learning disabilities. The entire population (28 teachers) participated in the study, employing a census sampling technique because the population size was manageable and all teachers possessed relevant experience with pupils who have learning disabilities.

A structured questionnaire titled "Learning Support Services for Pupils with Dyslexia Questionnaire (LSSPDQ)" was developed by the researchers and used for data collection. The questionnaire was organized into four sections corresponding to the four research questions. Section A addressed available learning support services, Section B addressed frequency of use, Section C addressed factors affecting use and Section D addressed challenges faced by teachers. Respondents were asked to rate each item using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. For availability and frequency items, response options were modified appropriately (Available/Not Available; Always/Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never). To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by two experts in special education from University of Lafia whose feedback informed the modification of ambiguous items. Data from the pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliability coefficient for the instrument was 0.81 indicating high internal consistency. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores. A benchmark of 2.50 was used as the decision point with mean scores of 2.50 and above interpreted as agreement (or available/frequent as applicable) while scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement (or not available/not frequent).

## Results

**Table 1: Mean Scores on Availability of Learning Support Services for Pupils with Dyslexia**

S/N	Item Description	Mean	Decision
1	Extra time given to pupils with dyslexia to complete assignments and tests	3.21	Available
2	Simplified worksheets and modified classwork	2.96	Available
3	One-on-one remedial instruction outside regular class hours	2.85	Available
4	Phonics-based reading materials	2.43	Not Available
5	Multisensory teaching resources (sand trays, textured letters, magnetic letters)	2.21	Not Available
6	Assistive technology devices (text-to-speech software, reading pens)	1.89	Not Available
7	Dyslexia screening and assessment tools	1.76	Not Available
8	Specialized dyslexia workbooks and intervention programmes	1.92	Not Available

Table 1 reveals the types of learning support services available for pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia. Three items (Items 1, 2 and 3) recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating that extra time for assignments, simplified worksheets and one-on-one remedial instruction were available. However, five items (Items 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) recorded mean scores below 2.50, indicating that phonics-based materials, multisensory resources, assistive technology, screening tools and specialized workbooks were not available. This finding implies that only basic, low-cost accommodations are available while specialized dyslexia-specific services and resources are largely absent.

**Table 2: Mean Scores on Frequency of Use of Learning Support Services**

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
9	Extra time during tests and examinations	3.04	Frequent
10	Simplified worksheets in daily classroom activities	2.89	Frequent
11	One-on-one remedial instruction sessions	2.31	Not Frequent
12	Use of visual aids during lessons	2.68	Frequent
13	Peer tutoring or buddy system support	2.42	Not Frequent

Table 2 shows that three items (Items 9, 10 and 12) recorded mean scores above 2.50, indicating that extra time, simplified worksheets and visual aids were frequently used. However, Items 11 (one-on-one remedial instruction) and 13 (peer tutoring) recorded mean scores below 2.50, indicating that these services were not frequently used despite being available. This suggests that even when services are available, their actual utilization by pupils may be limited due to factors like time constraints or teacher availability.

**Table 3: Mean Scores on Factors Affecting Use of Learning Support Services**

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
14	Inadequate teacher training in dyslexia-specific teaching methods	3.42	Affected
15	Large class sizes limiting individualized attention	3.35	Affected
16	Lack of appropriate instructional materials for dyslexia intervention	3.28	Affected
17	Insufficient funding for learning support programmes	3.51	Affected
18	Lack of time within the school schedule for pull-out interventions	3.19	Affected
19	Low awareness among teachers about how to identify pupils with dyslexia	3.44	Affected

Table 3 indicates that all six items (Items 14 to 19) recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, ranging from 3.19 to 3.51. This means that teachers agreed that inadequate training, large class sizes, lack of materials, insufficient funding, time constraints and low awareness all significantly affect the use of learning support services for pupils with dyslexia. The highest mean score (3.51) was recorded for insufficient funding, highlighting financial constraints as the most critical factor.

**Table 4: Mean Scores on Challenges Faced by Teachers in Providing Learning Support Services**

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
20	Lack of formal screening and assessment tools to identify dyslexia	3.48	Challenge
21	Absence of speech and language therapy services in the school	3.39	Challenge
22	Limited access to assistive technology devices	3.52	Challenge
23	Inadequate collaboration with parents of pupils with dyslexia	3.11	Challenge
24	High teacher-student ratio making individualized support difficult	3.43	Challenge
25	Lack of ongoing professional development opportunities in dyslexia intervention	3.37	Challenge

Table 4 shows that all six items (20 to 25) recorded mean scores above 2.50, ranging from 3.11 to 3.52. This indicates that teachers face multiple challenges in providing learning support

services to pupils with dyslexia. The highest mean score (3.52) was recorded for limited access to assistive technology devices, followed by lack of screening tools (3.48) and high teacher-student ratio (3.43). These findings suggest that systemic and resource-related challenges significantly impede teachers' ability to provide effective support to pupils with dyslexia.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings revealed that learning support services available for pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia, are limited to basic accommodations like extra time for assignments, simplified worksheets and one-on-one remedial instruction. Specialized resources including phonics-based materials, multisensory teaching resources, assistive technology devices, dyslexia screening tools and specialized intervention workbooks were found to be unavailable. This finding aligns with Olatunbosun et al. (2025), who reported that while foundational supports are generally available in special schools in Ekiti State, while significant gaps remain in the provision of specialised technological tools. The findings also corroborate the systematic review conducted by Sadiku et al. (2024) who identified lack of appropriate assistive tools as a major barrier to inclusive education in Nigerian schools. The unavailability of screening

The findings on frequency of use showed that even when services are available, their utilization is not optimal. One-on-one remedial education and peer tutoring were provided but were not frequently used. In contrast, extra time on assignments and simplified worksheets were available and used more regularly. This implies that the practical execution of these services may be limited by systemic issues like large class sizes and time constraints. In their assessment of inclusive education in Nasarawa State, James, et al. (2025) pointed out that inadequate infrastructure and inadequate teacher preparation continue to be persistent obstacles to efficient service delivery.

The study identified multiple factors affecting the use of learning support services, with insufficient funding emerging as the most critical factor. This finding aligns with the advocacy statements made at the 2026 SENTE Conference, where experts noted that insufficient funding and weak policies remain major barriers confronting families and schools supporting children with special needs (Obinna, 2026). The lack of funding affects the procurement of specialized materials, assistive technology and teacher training programmes, creating a cycle of inadequate service delivery. Inadequate teacher training in dyslexia-specific teaching methods was also identified as a significant factor, consistent with the findings of Bello, et al. (2023) who recommended that special education be made a compulsory course in teacher education programmes.

The challenges teachers face in providing learning support services are multifaceted. Limited access to assistive technology devices was rated as the highest challenge, followed by lack of screening tools and high teacher-student ratio. These findings reflect the broader challenges facing special education in Nigeria. The study by Sadiku, et al. (2024) revealed that despite the potential of educational technology to promote inclusive education, barriers like limited funding, inadequate teacher training and lack of infrastructure hinder widespread implementation. The absence of speech and language therapy services in the school is also concerning, as pupils with dyslexia often benefit from such services to address associated language difficulties.

The findings of this study have significant implications for policy and practice. First, there is an urgent need for improvement in funding for learning support services in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia. Second, teacher training programmes must include comprehensive content on dyslexia identification and intervention strategies. Third, the school should establish a screening and assessment unit for early identification of dyslexia. Fourth, assistive technology devices and specialized instructional materials should be procured and made available to teachers and pupils. Finally, collaboration between teachers, parents and

specialists should be strengthened to ensure a holistic approach to supporting pupils with dyslexia.

### **Conclusion**

This study assessed the availability and use of learning support services for pupils with dyslexia in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The results showed that there are some basic adjustments, there aren't many resources or programmes specifically tailored to dyslexia. Poor teacher training, a lack of resources, poor funding and low awareness are some of the reasons that contribute to the suboptimal frequency of use of existing services. The high teacher-to-student ratio, lack of screening tools, restricted access to assistive technology and dearth of professional development opportunities are just a few of the major issues that teachers must deal with. The study comes to the conclusion that pupils with dyslexia in the study area will continue to encounter obstacles to successful learning and academic achievement in the absence of focused interventions, more financing and thorough teacher preparation.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. School Administrators should prioritize the establishment of a dyslexia screening and assessment unit in the primary school section to enable early identification and appropriate intervention planning for affected pupils.
2. Nasarawa State Ministry of Education should institutionalize regular training and professional development workshops for teachers in Government Comprehensive Special School, Lafia focusing on dyslexia identification, multisensory teaching strategies and use of assistive technology.
3. School Heads should collaborate with specialists in special education and assistive technology to provide technical support and guidance on the procurement and use of appropriate learning support tools for pupils with dyslexia.
4. Budget Planning Officers should allocate increased funding specifically for the procurement of specialized dyslexia intervention materials, assistive technology devices, and phonics-based reading resources for the primary school section.

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