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Assessment of Psychological Development of Children with Special Needs in Nigeria: A Case Study of Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State

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Abstract

This study assessed the psychological development of children with special needs in Nigeria, using Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State, as a case study. Psychological development was examined across four domains: cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive functioning. The study also investigated factors influencing the psychological development of these children, including intervention strategies, availability of resources, parental support, and professional services. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised fifty (50) children with special needs enrolled at Acchieve Centre, and a total enumeration sampling technique was used to include all participants. Data were collected using a structured Psychological Development Assessment Questionnaire (PDAQ) and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation were employed for data analysis, with a criterion mean of 2.50 used for decision-making. Findings revealed that children with special needs at Acchieve Centre exhibited a moderate level of psychological development across cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive domains. The results also indicated that intervention strategies, availability of resources, parental support, and professional services positively influenced the psychological development of the children. Based on these findings, the study concluded that a supportive educational and therapeutic environment plays a critical role in enhancing the psychological development of children with special needs. The study therefore recommended the strengthening of individualized intervention programmes, increased provision of resources, enhanced parental involvement, and employment of qualified professionals in special needs centres. The study contributes empirical evidence to support improved practice, policy formulation, and further research on psychological development of children with special needs in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Psychological development, children with special needs, cognitive functioning, adaptive functioning, Acchieve Centre, Nigeria.*

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1. Introduction

Psychological development is a foundational aspect of childhood growth, encompassing cognitive processes, emotional regulation, social interaction, and adaptive functioning. These domains collectively influence a child's ability to learn, communicate, interact with others, and function independently within society. For children with special needs, psychological development often follows an atypical trajectory due to developmental, neurological, or behavioural conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, attention-deficit disorders, and multiple developmental challenges. As a result, these children frequently require specialized assessment, targeted interventions, and continuous support to achieve their full developmental potential.

Globally, there is increasing recognition of the importance of early psychological assessment and intervention for children with special needs. Research has consistently shown that timely and appropriate psychological support can significantly enhance cognitive abilities, emotional stability, social competence, and adaptive life skills (WHO, 2021). Psychological development not only determines academic performance but also shapes long-term outcomes such as independence, employability, mental health, and social inclusion. Consequently, understanding the psychological development of children with special needs has become a central concern in educational psychology, special education, and rehabilitation sciences.

In developing countries such as Nigeria, children with special needs often face additional challenges that may hinder optimal psychological development. These challenges include limited access to specialized services, inadequate assessment tools, shortage of trained professionals, socio-economic constraints, and cultural misconceptions surrounding disability. Although the Nigerian government and private organizations have made efforts to promote inclusive education and special needs services, empirical evidence on the psychological development of children with special needs remains insufficient, particularly within specialized rehabilitation centres. This lack of data makes it difficult to design context-appropriate interventions and evaluate the effectiveness of existing programmes.

Special education and rehabilitation centres play a vital role in supporting the psychological development of children with special needs by providing structured learning environments, therapeutic interventions, and professional support services. However, the effectiveness of these services largely depends on factors such as the quality of intervention strategies, availability of resources, parental involvement, and access to trained professionals. Without systematic assessment and documentation, it becomes challenging to determine whether these factors are adequately supporting the psychological growth of children within such institutions.

Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State, is one of the centres dedicated to providing educational and rehabilitative services for children with special needs. While the centre offers various programmes aimed at enhancing learning and development, there is limited documented empirical evidence assessing the psychological development of the children enrolled and the factors influencing their developmental outcomes. This gap highlights the need for a systematic assessment that captures the cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive functioning of these children within the context of the services they receive.

Against this background, this study focuses on the assessment of psychological development of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State, with particular attention to cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive domains. The study also examines key factors influencing psychological development, including intervention strategies, availability

of resources, parental support, and professional services. By adopting a descriptive survey approach, the study aims to generate empirical data that will inform educational practice, improve intervention planning, and contribute to policy development and future research on children with special needs in Nigeria.

1.1. Objective of the Study

The objective guiding this study is:

1. Assess the psychological development (cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive functioning) of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State.
2. Examine the factors influencing the psychological development of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Psychological development is fundamental to the overall growth, learning capacity, and social adjustment of children, particularly those with special needs. Children with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, attention-deficit disorders, and other developmental challenges often experience difficulties in cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, social interaction, and adaptive behavior. Without appropriate psychological assessment and intervention, these challenges may persist into adolescence and adulthood, limiting their independence and quality of life.

In Nigeria, despite the growing number of special needs children, there is limited empirical research focusing on their psychological development, especially within special education and rehabilitation centres. Many special needs institutions operate with inadequate psychological assessment tools, insufficient trained professionals, and limited evidence-based intervention strategies. As a result, the psychological needs of these children may not be systematically identified or appropriately addressed. This gap is more pronounced at the community and institutional levels, where contextual data are often lacking to guide effective intervention planning.

At Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State, children with special needs receive educational and rehabilitative services; however, there is a paucity of documented evidence assessing the extent of their psychological development and the factors influencing it. The absence of such empirical assessment makes it difficult to determine the effectiveness of existing psychological and educational interventions, as well as to identify challenges hindering optimal development. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by assessing the psychological development of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre and examining the factors influencing their developmental outcomes, with a view to informing practice, policy, and future research within the Nigerian context.

1.3. Research Questions

Based on the specific objective, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of psychological development (cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive functioning) of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State?
2. What factors influence the psychological development of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri?

1.4. Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and statement of the problem of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated.

- **H_{01} (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant level of psychological development (cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive functioning) among children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State.
- **H_{11} (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant level of psychological development (cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive functioning) among children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State.

Hypothesis Two

- **H_{02} (Null Hypothesis):** Factors such as intervention strategies, availability of resources, parental support, and professional services do not significantly influence the psychological development of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri.
- **H_{12} (Alternative Hypothesis):** Factors such as intervention strategies, availability of resources, parental support, and professional services significantly influence the psychological development of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri.

2.0. Literature Review

2.1. Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs are individuals whose developmental, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensory, or physical functioning deviates significantly from age-expected norms, thereby requiring specialized educational and psychological support (Heward, 2017). These differences may arise from congenital conditions, neurological disorders, environmental factors, or developmental delays. In educational contexts, special needs children are those whose cognitive, affective, or physical functioning differs markedly from typical development, necessitating individualized instruction, specialized therapies, and continuous monitoring (Slavin, 2006).

Common categories of special needs include:

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Intellectual disabilities

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder

Sensory impairments (hearing or visual impairments)

Physical impairments

Chronic health conditions

These categories help educators and psychologists design appropriate interventions that support adaptive functioning, academic achievement, and social inclusion.

2.1.1. Children with Autism

Autism is described as a pervasive developmental condition characterized by impaired social interaction, communication deficits, and repetitive behavioural patterns (Colman, 2006).

Slavin (2006) notes that autism significantly affects verbal and non-verbal communication, interpersonal engagement, and adaptive behaviour. Symptoms typically emerge in early childhood and may persist across the lifespan. Although autism is a lifelong developmental disorder, early intervention, behavioural therapy, communication training, and structured educational programmes significantly improve social skills and reduce maladaptive behaviours. Psychologists and educators play crucial roles in providing early developmental screening, individualized therapy, and structured learning plans.

2.1.2. Children with Sensory, Physical, and Health Impairments

Children with sensory impairments experience limitations in visual or auditory functioning, which affect their ability to receive and interpret information. Examples include children who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired. Children with physical impairments may have cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, or muscular dystrophy, affecting movement, coordination, or motor skills. Health impairments include chronic illnesses such as diabetes, sickle-cell disease, immune disorders, and other medical conditions that disrupt normal functioning.

According to Slavin (2006), these children require a combination of therapy, medical support, psychological intervention, and adaptive educational strategies to promote learning and independence.

2.1.3. Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, often evident before age seven. These symptoms interfere with learning, social relationships, and behavioural regulation. ADHD affects approximately 2–10% of school-age children globally (Slavin, 2006). In educational settings, ADHD significantly impacts academic performance due to difficulties maintaining focus, completing tasks, and controlling impulsive behaviour. Psychological and behavioural interventions—including reinforcement techniques, structured routines, and cognitive-behavioural strategies—are essential in managing the condition.

2.1.4. Children with Intellectual Disabilities (Mental Retardation)

Intellectual disability refers to substantial limitations in cognitive functioning and adaptive behaviour. Such limitations affect communication, self-care, social interaction, functional academics, and independent living. Based on IQ scores, Slavin (2006) classifies intellectual disability as:

Mild (IQ 55–70) – Educable

Moderate (IQ around 55) – Trainable

Severe/Profound (IQ below 50) – Custodial care

Early diagnosis, functional skills training, psychosocial support, and special education significantly enhance adaptive functioning and quality of life

2.2. Concept of Psychological Development

Psychological development refers to the progressive changes that occur in a child's mental, emotional, social, and behavioural functioning over time. It encompasses the acquisition of skills, abilities, attitudes, and behaviors that enable individuals to adapt effectively to their environment (Santrock, 2019). Psychological development is particularly critical during

childhood, as it forms the foundation for later academic achievement, emotional well-being, social relationships, and independent living.

For children with special needs, psychological development may deviate from typical developmental patterns due to neurological, cognitive, or behavioural conditions. These deviations often require specialized assessment and intervention to support optimal growth and functioning (Mash & Wolfe, 2020).

2.1.3 Cognitive Development of Children with Special Needs

Cognitive development involves the growth of mental processes such as perception, memory, attention, language, problem-solving, and reasoning. Children with special needs may experience delays or impairments in these areas, which can affect learning and academic engagement (Piaget, 1972). Structured educational programmes and cognitive-based interventions have been shown to improve cognitive functioning among children with developmental challenges (Kirk, Gallagher, & Coleman, 2017).

2.1.4 Emotional Development of Children with Special Needs

Emotional development refers to the ability to understand, express, and regulate emotions appropriately. Many children with special needs, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder, struggle with emotional regulation, leading to frustration, anxiety, or behavioural difficulties (Thompson, 2019). Emotional support, therapeutic interventions, and consistent routines are essential in promoting emotional stability and psychological well-being.

2.1.5 Social Development of Children with Special Needs

Social development involves the acquisition of skills needed to interact effectively with others. These include communication, cooperation, empathy, and relationship-building. Social deficits are common among children with special needs and may lead to social isolation if not addressed (Guralnick, 2018). Structured peer interactions and social skills training have been found to significantly enhance social functioning.

2.1.6 Adaptive Functioning of Children with Special Needs

Adaptive functioning refers to the practical, everyday skills required for independent living, such as self-care, communication, and social responsibility. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2022), limitations in adaptive functioning are central to many developmental disorders. Improving adaptive skills is a major goal of special education and rehabilitation programmes.

2.1.7 Factors Influencing Psychological Development of Children with Special Needs

Several factors influence the psychological development of children with special needs. These include:

- **Intervention Strategies:** Evidence-based and individualized interventions significantly improve developmental outcomes (Odom et al., 2015).
- **Availability of Resources:** Access to learning materials, assistive devices, and therapeutic tools enhances developmental progress.
- **Parental Support:** Active parental involvement positively influences emotional security and adaptive behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

- **Professional Services:** The presence of trained psychologists, therapists, and special educators plays a crucial role in assessment and intervention.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

Piaget's theory posits that children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment, progressing through distinct stages of cognitive development (Piaget, 1972). Although children with special needs may progress through these stages at a slower pace, the theory emphasizes the importance of providing developmentally appropriate learning experiences to support cognitive growth.

2.2.2 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky emphasized the role of social interaction, language, and cultural context in cognitive and psychological development. His concept of the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** highlights the importance of guided support from adults and peers (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory is particularly relevant to children with special needs, as structured support can significantly enhance learning and development.

2.3 Empirical Review

A major contribution of psychology to special needs development is early identification. Guralnick (2017), in a longitudinal study of 320 children with developmental delays, found that early psychological assessment significantly predicted academic readiness, adaptive behaviour, and social functioning. Children assessed before age four demonstrated higher cognitive gains and stronger emotional regulation after three years of structured intervention.

Similarly, a Nigerian study by Nwosu (2021), involving 186 children across five special schools in southeastern Nigeria, reported that psychological screening helped detect developmental disorders earlier, thereby increasing the likelihood of receiving therapy before school age. The study concluded that the absence of psychologists in most public schools leads to late diagnosis, which worsens behavioural and learning difficulties.

In another study, Oyewumi and Oladipo (2019) examined 212 children with learning disabilities in Oyo State and found that psychological assessment using standardized tests (WISC-IV, WRAT, and adaptive behaviour scales) improved individualized education planning and significantly increased academic engagement. Their findings confirm that psychological evaluation is a key driver of effective placement and intervention.

Behavioural psychology has also been widely studied in relation to special needs. A meta-analysis by Eldevik et al. (2010), covering 34 controlled studies, concluded that Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) leads to moderate to strong improvements in IQ, adaptive skills, and communication among children with autism. Children receiving 20–40 hours of behavioural therapy per week showed significantly better functioning than those receiving eclectic or unstructured support.

In Nigeria, Ogunlade and Alade (2020) conducted an experimental study involving 60 children with mild intellectual disabilities in Lagos. They discovered that behavioural modification techniques—reinforcement, prompting, shaping, and modelling—produced significant improvements in social interaction and classroom behaviour compared with the control group. The study reinforced the centrality of behavioural psychology in special needs management.

Similarly, Adebayo (2018) used a quasi-experimental design on 48 children with ADHD in three primary schools and found that cognitive-behavioural strategies reduced impulsivity and improved task completion, with statistically significant post-test differences between the treatment and control groups.

Psychology also contributes to the emotional adjustment of children with special needs. In a randomized controlled trial, Denham et al. (2012) examined 240 children with socio-emotional difficulties and found that emotion-focused counselling improved self-regulation, empathy, and frustration tolerance. Children who received weekly counselling for 10 weeks showed greater reductions in emotional dysregulation.

Nigerian evidence is consistent. Ogunleye and Akinyemi (2020) studied 120 children with autism in Abuja and found that counselling interventions significantly improved emotional stability, reduced tantrum frequency, and enhanced peer interaction. Similarly, Ede and Okonkwo (2017) found that school-based counselling reduced anxiety and improved classroom behaviour among children with learning disabilities.

Furthermore, Anene and Eze (2021) reported that parent–child counselling sessions improved emotional bonding and reduced behavioural problems in children with Down syndrome in Enugu State. These findings consistently underscore the importance of counselling psychology in addressing emotional and behavioural challenges.

Educational psychologists help adapt instruction to meet the learning needs of specialneeds children. A notable international study by Lyon, Shaywitz, and Shaywitz (2003) revealed that children with dyslexia showed significant academic improvement when instructional methods were aligned with neuropsychological principles of reading. The researchers found that multisensory and phonologically structured instruction improved reading accuracy and fluency more than traditional teaching.

In Kenya, Muiruri and Wambugu (2018) conducted a mixed-method study involving 204 learners with disabilities and found that educational psychology-based instructional modifications (differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and multisensory teaching) significantly improved academic performance and classroom participation.

Similarly, a Nigerian study by Nduka and Adegbite (2020) involving 150 learners with ADHD found that educational psychology interventions—structured routines, task chunking, reinforcement, and visual cues—improved attention span and reduced disruptive behaviour.

Developmental psychology provides insight into how children grow across cognitive, language, and social domains.
A longitudinal study by Sigman and Ruskin (1999) on 123 children with autism found that early developmental intervention increased social attention, joint engagement, and receptive language skills over a five-year period.

In Nigeria, Balogun and Uche (2019) examined 92 children with developmental delays in Ibadan and found that developmental stimulation therapy significantly improved cognitive development scores using the Bayley Scales of Infant Development. Children who received weekly developmental sessions scored higher in problem-solving, language, and motor development.

Additionally, Arowolo (2022) found that structured developmental play therapy improved cognitive flexibility and communication among children with mild developmental disabilities in Osun State.

Feehan et al. (2003) emphasized that psychological interventions are most effective when psychologists collaborate with speech therapists, occupational therapists, and educators. Their study of 280 children receiving multidisciplinary care showed improvements in communication, adaptive skills, emotional adjustment, and overall quality of life.

A South African study by Van Rensburg and Du Toit (2016) reported similar findings among children with cerebral palsy. Multidisciplinary intervention improved mobility, communication, emotional wellbeing, and daily living skills.

In Nigeria, Adeosun and colleagues (2021) studied 140 children attending two special needs centres in Lagos and found that centres with psychologists, speech therapists, and behavioural therapists recorded better cognitive and social outcomes than those lacking psychological support.

3.0. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to systematically assess the psychological development of children with special needs and to describe the factors influencing such development as they exist at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State, without manipulation of variables. This approach aligns directly with the objectives of the study, which focus on assessment and description rather than causation.

3.2 Area of the Study

The study was carried out at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State. Acchieve Centre is a special education and rehabilitation facility that provides educational, psychological, and therapeutic services to children with various special needs, including autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, attention-deficit disorders, and multiple disabilities.

3.3 Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study comprised fifty (50) children with special needs enrolled at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State. Due to the manageable size of the population, the study adopted a total enumeration sampling technique, thereby involving all fifty (50) children in the study.

3.4 Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured Psychological Development Assessment Questionnaire (PDAQ) designed by the researcher. The instrument consisted of three sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic information of the children (age, gender, type of special need).

- **Section B:** Items assessing psychological development in four domains—cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive functioning.
- **Section C:** Items assessing factors influencing psychological development such as intervention strategies, availability of resources, parental support, and professional services.

Sections B and C were structured on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1).

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Face and content validity of the instrument were established by experts in special education and educational psychology to ensure adequacy and relevance of the items. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were employed to answer the research questions and address the objectives of the study. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used for decision-making. Mean scores equal to or above 2.50 were regarded as accepted, while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as rejected.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Children

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Children with Special Needs

Age Range (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
5–7	18	36.0
8–10	20	40.0
11–13	12	24.0
Total	**50**	**100.0**

Interpretation:
Most of the children (40.0%) were between the ages of 8 and 10 years, indicating that a significant proportion of the children at Acchieve Centre were in their middle childhood stage.

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution of Children

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	30	60.0
Female	20	40.0
Total	**50**	**100.0**

Interpretation:
Male children constituted 60.0% of the sample, while female children accounted for 40.0%, suggesting a higher enrolment of male children with special needs at Acchieve Centre.

Table 4.3: Type of Special Need

Type of Special Need	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Autism Spectrum Disorder	22	44.0
Intellectual Disability	15	30.0
ADHD	8	16.0
Multiple Disabilities	5	10.0
Total	**50**	**100.0**

Interpretation:
autism spectrum disorder represented the largest category (44.0%), indicating that it was the most prevalent condition among the children at the centre.

4.2 Psychological Development of Children with Special Needs

This section addresses Research Question One, which seeks to determine the level of psychological development of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre.

Table 4.4: Psychological Development of Children

Domain	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
Cognitive Functioning	2.89	0.64	Accepted
Emotional Functioning	2.74	0.71	Accepted
Social Functioning	2.68	0.69	Accepted
Adaptive Functioning	2.81	0.66	Accepted
Grand Mean	**2.78**	—	**Accepted**

Interpretation:
The grand mean score of 2.78 exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that children with special needs at Acchieve Centre demonstrated a moderate level of psychological development across cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive domains.

4.3 Factors Influencing Psychological Development

This section addresses Research Question Two, which examines the factors influencing psychological development.

Table 4.5: Factors Influencing Psychological Development

Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
Intervention Strategies	3.01	0.58	Accepted
Availability of Resources	2.85	0.63	Accepted
Parental Support	2.92	0.67	Accepted
Professional Services	3.05	0.54	Accepted
Grand Mean	**2.96**	—	**Accepted**

Interpretation:
The grand mean of 2.96 indicates that intervention strategies, availability of resources, parental support, and professional services positively influence the psychological development of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre.

5.0. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Discussion of Findings

This study assessed the psychological development of children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State, focusing on cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive functioning, as well as the factors influencing such development. The findings revealed that children with special needs at the centre exhibited a moderate level of psychological development across all assessed domains, as indicated by the grand mean score exceeding the criterion mean of 2.50. This result suggests that the children possessed measurable levels of cognitive ability, emotional regulation, social interaction, and adaptive behaviours, which are essential for daily functioning and learning.

The moderate level of cognitive functioning observed among the children implies that many of them demonstrated the ability to understand instructions, engage in learning activities, and exhibit basic problem-solving skills. This finding may be attributed to the structured educational programmes and learning interventions provided at Acchieve Centre. Cognitive development is a core component of psychological growth, and improvements in this domain often translate into better academic engagement and task performance among children with special needs.

In terms of emotional functioning, the findings showed that the children demonstrated a fair level of emotional awareness and regulation. Although children with developmental challenges often struggle with emotional expression and control, the results suggest that the therapeutic and supportive environment at Acchieve Centre may be contributing positively to emotional stability. Emotional development is crucial for behavioural adjustment and mental well-being, particularly for children with autism spectrum disorder and related conditions.

The results also revealed a moderate level of social functioning, indicating that the children were able to interact with peers and caregivers to some extent. Social skill deficits are common among children with special needs, especially those with autism spectrum disorder. However, the presence of group activities, peer interaction, and guided social engagement at the centre may have enhanced their social competencies. Improved social functioning is essential for inclusion, relationship building, and community participation.

Similarly, findings on adaptive functioning showed that the children demonstrated reasonable levels of independence in basic daily living skills such as self-care, communication, and routine activities. Adaptive skills are critical indicators of functional independence and long-term quality of life. The observed level of adaptive development suggests that intervention efforts aimed at promoting life skills and independence at Acchieve Centre are yielding positive outcomes.

Regarding factors influencing psychological development, the study found that intervention strategies, availability of resources, parental support, and professional services played significant roles in shaping the developmental outcomes of the children. The high mean scores recorded for intervention strategies and professional services underscore the importance of structured programmes and the involvement of trained personnel such as psychologists, therapists, and special educators. Effective interventions tailored to individual needs are vital in addressing developmental delays and promoting holistic growth.

The influence of parental support highlights the critical role families play in reinforcing therapeutic goals and supporting children beyond the institutional setting. Consistent collaboration between parents and professionals enhances continuity of care and maximizes developmental progress. Additionally, the availability of adequate resources, including learning materials and therapeutic tools, was identified as a key factor supporting psychological development, emphasizing the need for sustained investment in special needs education.

Overall, the findings of this study align with existing literature that emphasizes the combined influence of institutional support, professional services, and family involvement in promoting the psychological development of children with special needs.

5.2. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that children with special needs at Acchieve Centre, Warri, Delta State exhibit a moderate level of psychological development in cognitive, emotional, social, and adaptive domains. The study further established that psychological development is positively influenced by factors such as effective intervention strategies, availability of resources, parental support, and access to professional services. These findings demonstrate that a supportive educational and therapeutic environment can significantly enhance the psychological well-being and functional abilities of children with special needs.

The study contributes valuable empirical evidence to the limited body of research on psychological development of children with special needs in Nigeria and provides a basis for improving practices and policies within special education and rehabilitation centres.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Strengthening Intervention Programmes:**
Special needs centres should intensify individualized and evidence-based intervention programmes to further enhance cognitive, social, emotional, and adaptive development among children with special needs.

2. **Provision of Adequate Resources:**
   Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private stakeholders should ensure the provision of adequate learning materials, therapeutic equipment, and assistive technologies to support effective psychological development.

3. **Parental Involvement and Support:**
   Parents and caregivers should be actively involved in intervention processes through regular counselling, training workshops, and home-based support strategies to reinforce developmental gains.

4. **Employment of Qualified Professionals:**
   Special education centres should employ more qualified psychologists, therapists, and special educators to ensure comprehensive and multidisciplinary support services for children with special needs.

5. **Policy and Practice Improvement:**
   Policymakers should use findings from empirical studies such as this to develop and implement policies that support early assessment, intervention, and inclusive services for children with special needs in Nigeria.

6. **Future Research:**
   Further studies should be conducted using larger samples and multiple special needs centres across different regions of Nigeria to allow broader generalization of findings and deeper understanding of contextual factors influencing psychological development.

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