

Sociology of Special Education: Parents and Teachers' Knowledge, Beliefs and Attitudes towards Persons with Disabilities in Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District, Ghana

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Abstract

The study investigated parents and teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese district using cross-sectional survey design. Multistage sampling procedures were used to select 400 subjects. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyse the data. The results show that teachers demonstrated attitudes that were eufunctional to the education of PWDs while parents showed attitudes that were dysfunctional to their education. Overall, parents and teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes are able to predict their positive behaviours toward the education of PWDs substantially when these factors are functional to PWDs' survival. This phenomenon can help boost PWDs' confidence. Therefore, management of the District Education Directorate should constantly organise sensitisation and advocacy programmes for members of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and family-heads on the rights of PWDs and how to manage them. This will help unlock the socio-cultural barriers to the education of PWDs.

Keywords: Attitudes, Behaviours, Beliefs, Disability, and Knowledge

Introduction

Sociology of special education has become a "hot" area in today's schooling system as evidence mounts on the critical role it plays in helping to understand better the social well-being of all, especially persons with disabilities (PWDs), in our schools. It is a key area in this 21st Century, demanding multiculturalism, inclusivity, flexibility, and fair participation in the pursuit of 'education for all' to meet the needs of all, particularly students with special educational needs (SWSENs) in both the micro and macro societies. One of the facets of sociology of special education which has not received significant scholarly attention is parents' and teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes toward SWSENs and PWDs in general in a multicultural patriarch society (Aboagye, 2020; Bheenaveni, 2016; Vanderpuye, 2013). According to United Nations (2015), almost 15 percent of the world's population (over one billion) live with and are conscious of one or more form of disability. Of this number, 150 million of them are under age 18. In excess of 80 percent of these youngsters dwell in developing nations such as Ghana.

Parents and teachers' dysfunctional knowledge, beliefs, and values seem to be affecting the country's quest for inclusive education in all the levels of education (Gyimah, Ackah Jnr & Yarquah, 2010; Vanderpuye, 2013). Sociologically, teachers and other stakeholders have their beliefs and value systems which to a large extent influence their actions in the implementation of inclusive schooling (Asamoah, Ofori-Dua, Cudjoe, Abdullah & Nyarko, 2018). Therefore, the country's mission to integrate PWDs in mainstream schooling education must be woven and conceptualised within the socio-cultural settings of the micro (school) society. This calls for the need to constantly analyse issues of PWDs and their schooling sociologically, where the education system will be considered as a social institution with a social function through social process. More so, for the

need for researchers in the area of Sociology of Special Education to pay attention to the issues of disabilities and their related socio-cultural dynamics in our schools and the society at large.

The current educational system in Ghana and other countries has created room for PWDs to be educated in the conventional education system (Gyimah et al., 2010; Stebing, 2016). Even though most parents and teachers are aware of the idea that educating PWDs in this manner is a good way to ensure equal educational opportunities, their socio-cultural beliefs seem not to concur to the idea of inclusive education in mainstream schooling system (Asamoah et al., 2018). Gyasi, Okrah and Anku (2020) also posit that teachers' knowledge of special educational needs and disability students is very limited. Gyasi et al. added that most teachers in Ghana lack in-depth knowledge of inclusive education, and its enacted and operational policies and their application. Also, most teachers lack the skills and competencies needed to manage students with special educational needs (Gyasi et al., 2020). These situations are thwarting the goal of 'education for all' in Ghana. Therefore, there is the need for an urgent intervention to help narrow these emerging challenges, as indicated. However, for such intervention to work as expected there is the need for stakeholders, particularly, parents and teachers to acquire the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies in order to understand the concept of disability and its sociological underpinnings.

Most people in non-regional capital towns in Ghana continue to perceive a disability as a deviance; as a result, they end up focusing on the inadequacies and the negative characteristics of PWDs rather than their strengths and abilities (Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015; Kpodoe, 2021). Therefore, there is the need for schools, which serve as micro society in modern societies, to educate all and ensure that they meet the needs of all learners. The cultural beliefs, practices and attitudes toward a disability differ; therefore, the educational system of the country must ensure that inclusive education is implemented fully because inclusivity is seen as a concept that can help us to accommodate these beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours for national integration (Boakye-Akomea, 2015; Gyimah et al., 2010; Stebing, 2016; Vanderpuye, 2013).

Parents and teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes determine largely how they handle and manage PWDs either in the home or school (Gyasi et al., 2020). According to Boakye-Akomeah (2015), it is for the most part hard for non-oriented instructors to acknowledge the presence of PWDs; this may be as a result of their little understanding of the sociology of disability and Special Education. Hayford (as cited in Aboagye, 2020) also posits that conventional instructors in the mainstream schools and classrooms typically raise worries about comprehensive training on the sociology of disability. Improving parents' and teachers' knowledge and competencies in order for them to understand the sociology of a disability will help boost their acceptance level which will in turn help boost the performance of PWDs in schools.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined parents' and teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese (AAK) district of Central Region of Ghana, and the possible influence of these factors on their behaviour towards the education of PWDs. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the level of parents' and teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes toward SWSEs in AAK district.
2. Find out the potential influence of lack of parents' and teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes on their behaviour regarding the education of children with a disability.

Significance of the Study

It is imperative that parents and teachers know the beliefs, knowledge, values, attitude and culture of learners in order to understand their conceptualisation of a disability. This study will provide information that will help in identifying some possible solutions for parents' and teachers' lack of knowledge, beliefs and attitudes on their behaviour regarding the education of children with a disability. Again, the findings will provide knowledge that will help reduce the wrong belief and attitude stakeholders have toward PWDs.

Also, dissemination of the findings will enhance stakeholders' knowledge on the need to support the education of PWDs. Increase in their knowledge level will help them appreciate the value of education and the challenges PWDs face in accessing education. This, the findings will provide information for stakeholders to enhance their knowledge and beliefs toward PWDs, a phenomenon which is likely to help nurture stakeholders' attitudes and beliefs toward PWDs. Hopefully, the study will also help in providing information that can be useful in changing the dysfunctional attitudes of stakeholders toward PWDs, and facilitating access to education by the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service to all stakeholders.

Literature Review

Parents' and teachers' knowledge of a disability generally refers to their awareness or possession of a disability information, facts, ideas, truth and principles (Picard, 2015). More information and comprehension of the necessities of PWDs helps parents and instructors to change their perspectives towards them. Yet, lack of knowledge among parents and teachers makes it difficult for parents and teachers to provide the needed support that PWDs need to adapt meaningfully in an inclusive setting (Kpodoe, 2021). This implies that educators' knowledge of what a disability is could bring about the development of inclusive education while an absence of such knowledge could lead to an educational system that is unfair to SWSEs and PWDs (Dukmak, 2013; Srivastava, de Boer & Pijl, 2015).

People's knowledge is largely shaped by their culture. Within the context of this study, culture is seen as the collection of beliefs, habits, and practices that basically determine the way parents and teachers conduct their social relationships, assist members of the society in interpreting reality, and help members differentiate one social group from another. Quite apart from their knowledge, culture also shapes their beliefs which at the

long run influence their attitudes towards PWDs (Bheenaveni, 2016). Their beliefs and values, correct or wrong, constitute our attitude that may in turn affect our behaviour (Fazio, 1986).

Communities, families and individuals have different beliefs; which is why parents' and teachers' attitude and behaviour toward PWDs also differ (Dukmak, 2013). The more important the beliefs and values of parents and teachers, the more resistant they are to change. As parents and teachers within the Ghanaian cultural milieu, their beliefs differ because they are educated in a multicultural setting (Gyimah et al., 2010). Therefore, it is not surprise to see differences in parents' and teachers' attitude and behaviour toward SWSNs and PWDs as a whole. Unfortunately, most parents' beliefs and attitudes seem to be dysfunctional to the goal of inclusive education while that of teachers seem to be functional to the success of inclusive education in Ghana (Gyasi et al., 2020). As part of the teacher education curriculum, institutions are to expose preservice teachers to the concept of inclusive education and the management of PWDs in general (Gyasi et al., 2020; Kpodoe, 2021). This makes teachers to have relative knowledge and understanding regarding inclusive education, a situation which seems to be making teachers develop more positive attitude toward SWSNs and PWDs as compare to parents (Kpodoe, 2021), particularly parents who are not educogenic.

The argument of the study is rooted in the assumption of self-efficacy theory, which posits that the unique cooperation between individuals, their conduct, and their current circumstance is shown by equal determinism (Gyimah et al., 2010). This implies that parents and instructors' demeanour toward SWSNs and PWDs in general is subject to their capacity to get the idea of what a disability is within their socio-cultural setting (Gyimah et al., 2010; Vanderpuye, 2013; Boakye-Akomea, 2015). The centre principle of the hypothesis is that the view of stakeholders and their conviction towards a disability influence how they act towards PWDs and SWSNs (Boakye-Akomea, 2015). For this situation, stakeholders' disposition towards PWDs or SWSNs not entirely set in stone by friendly ecological impacts, but also essentially directed by their convictions, values, feelings, discernments, and translations of a disability.

The concept of 'education for all' has become an acceptable and doable concept in Ghana and other countries. The concept has come to solidify the argument for inclusivity in popular education; that is, educating PWDs in a mainstream school. Generally, instructors assumed that a kid with a disability had a right to equal educational prospects (Lopes, Monteiro & Sil, 2014). However, these opportunities can be thwarted by the negative attitudes of parents and teachers toward PWDs and inclusive education (Kpodoe, 2021). Teachers working in public basic schools in Ghana are expected to have positive attitudes toward PWDs in order to deliver an effective platform for inclusive practices (Gyimah et al., 2010; Vanderpuye, 2013). As a result, all students are expected to be included in the regular classroom, a system which has forced instructors to change their convictions and suppositions about population or mainstream schooling.

It is expected that conventional teachers will take proprietorship and guarantee that all kids have fitting schooling so a unique design for SWSNs is pointless (Aboagye, 2020; Boakye-Akomea, 2015). Creating room

for people to develop and nurture positive attitudes toward a disability is more than inclusive education. There is the need to use education as a social reconstruction tool to change the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of stakeholders toward PWDs positively. This calls for the need to reconstruct the school, curriculum, and pedagogy sociologically in order to ensure total integration for all in both the micro and macro societies. The conceptual argument of the study is shown in Figure 1.

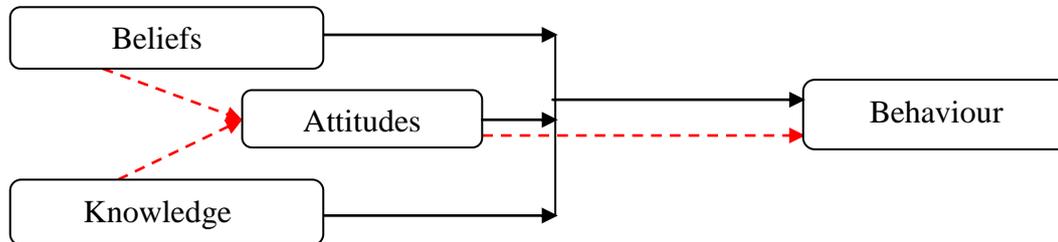


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Source: Adapted from Fazio (1986)

The attitude-to-behaviour process model posits that behaviours stem from individuals' perceptions of an attitude object and a situation in which the attitude object is encountered (Gyimah et al., 2010). Within the context of this study, it is argued that major stakeholders feeling or way of thinking that affects their behaviour is largely influenced by their knowledge on disability and inclusive education and also their socio-cultural beliefs regarding these concepts. It is, therefore, assume that major stakeholders in education attitudes toward SWSEs and PWDs guide their behaviour through conscious consideration of and deliberation about their attitudes and its implications for inclusive education in general (Gyasi et al., 2020; Kpodoe, 2021). This means, the stakeholders' impression formation, impulsive behaviours, prejudices, and close relationships, to name a few, must be functional to the course of inclusive education in Ghana.

As indicated in Figure 1, the argument of this study is that with appropriate and positive knowledge and beliefs that are in favour of a disability and SWSEs in the society, major stakeholders are likely to develop and nurture positive attitudes towards a disability which in the long run will enhance their general feelings toward SWSEs and PWDs (Fazio, 1986; Kpodoe, 2021). These dynamics will manifest into a significant positive change in behaviour of parents and teachers toward PWDs and SWSEs. Similarly, if the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes are not positive, it may lead to negative behaviours toward PWDs and SWSEs. The study also, hypothesised that, attitudes of parents and teachers can serve as a mediator between their knowledge and beliefs combined, and their behaviour toward a disability.

Research Methodology

The study was cross-sectional that makes use of concurrent triangulation mixed methods design to critically examine parents' and teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes towards a disability sociologically from pragmatists' perspective. Philosophical orientation of pragmatism creates room for researchers to combine elements of quantitative and qualitative research to answer research questions or deal with specific objectives

(Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This design was used because the researchers wanted to better understand parents' and teachers' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs toward PWDs and their education in greater depth, increase confidence in their findings, and provide more evidence while offsetting possible shortcomings from using a single approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Also, this design was used because the researchers wanted to draw on potential strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to explore diverse perspectives and uncover relationships that exist between the intricate layers of disability and education of PWDs.

Study Area

The AAK district of Central Region of Ghana is one of the deprived areas in Ghana (AAKD, 2021). There are three paramunicipalities in the area: These are (1) Abura with the vital seat at Abakrampa, (2) Asebu with the foremost seat at Asebu, and (3) Kwamankese with the fundamental seat at Ayeldu. Abakrampa, Asebu, Odompo and Ayeldu were the communities chosen for the study. According to Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2022), 5.4 percent of the populace in AAK district are PWDs. The extent of the male populace with disability is marginally lower (3.9%) than females (4.3 %). The sorts of disabilities in the locale include vision, hearing, speech, physical, intellectual, and emotional disabilities. People with visual impairment recorded the most noteworthy of 43.7 percent followed by physical inability (29.2%). There are more females with vision, physical and emotional disabilities than males in the areas. Of the disabled populace, 48.2 percent have never been to school (GSS, 2022).

Population, sample size and sampling procedure

The study population was all parents and teachers in AAK district of the Central Region of Ghana. According to GSS (2022), there are 567 professional teachers and 34,020 parents in the district. The study population was therefore, 34,587. A sample size of 400, made up of 375 (66.3%) professional teachers and 25 (.07%) parents, were used. The sample of professional teachers used was based on the recommendations of Glen (2021) who avers that a sample size of 5-10 percent for mixed methods study is appropriate; while that of parents was guided by the comments of Creswell and Creswell (2018) who indicated that in a qualitative study, emphasis is on quality and representativeness of the data and not largeness of the data. Therefore, it was appropriate to use more teachers and few parents since the emphasis was on the quality and representativeness of the data. The teachers were more heterogeneous while that of the parents were more homogeneous as a result more teachers were selected for variation purposes.

In relation to sampling procedure, multistage sampling procedures were used to select the respondents. The researchers first selected four communities purposively: Abakrampa, Asebu, Odompo and Ayeldu. Again, the researchers employed stratified non-random sampling technique to select the respondents and participants based on gender stratum used. Thus, in each of the communities, the opportuneness sampling technique was used to handpick the subjects based on their gender.

Data collection instrument, procedure and analysis

A questionnaire for teachers and an interview guide for parents were the instruments used to collect the data. Questionnaire was used for the teachers because they were in a better position to read and understand the items in the questionnaire. However, for the parents, interview guide was used because most of them were not in a better position to read and understand the issues as expected. The close-ended items used in the questionnaire were measured arithmetically using discrete scale. The items in the two instruments focused on the same issues. However, items in the interview guide created room for the researchers to probe further and to guarantee open discussion to learn further on the issues. The researchers constructed the instruments by contextualising the issues within the Ghanaian cultural context. Items were adapted from the instruments used by Kpodoe (2021).

Both face and content validities of the instruments were established by engaging experts, teachers and parents to review. Also, in order to establish the construct legitimacy of the questionnaire, the researchers performed confirmatory factor analysis which guided us to reduce the items from 89 to 67. The reliability of the scale for knowledge, beliefs, attitude and behaviour toward disability were .837, .799, .892 and .887, which were all deemed reliable and appropriate.

Since the subjects were all members of the various Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in the public basic schools in the district, the researchers administered the instruments during their PTA meetings for the 2021/2022 academic year. However, in establishing the credibility of the data, the researchers used multiple sources in order to establish consistency. The data obtained from the teachers using questionnaire were harmonise and better explained phenomenologically using the qualitative data obtained from the parents. Data were gathered from different people at different points in time and in different settings. Specifically, the questionnaire print-outs were administered on the day the various PTA meetings were held in the schools. In some schools, the questionnaire was administered before the meeting and in some cases after the meeting. Four trained field assistants helped in administering the questionnaire print-outs.

However, the interviews were conducted by the researchers personally on face-to-face bases. For the participants, data were obtained from most of them at their respective homes after seeking their consents. Proceeding to the administration of the instruments, and casual acquaintance visits were made by the researchers and the field assistants to the four selected communities and all the public basic schools in these communities. The selected respondents and participants have the requisite information needed regarding stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs toward PWDs. Also, they were the direct bearer of the negative consequences of labelling of PWDs and their education.

The researchers contacted the various PTA chairpersons to schedule a time in their scheduled PTA meetings with members. The field work was done in two stages. Stage One focused on the administration of the questionnaire and the conduct of the interviews while stage Two was dedicated to the recovering of the

questionnaire print-outs distributed. At the end of the data collection, the researchers were able to collect complete and accurate data from 369 respondents (professional teachers) and 25 participants (parents). This resulted in 100 percent participation rate and 98.4 percent response rate which were deemed appropriate. Ethical protocols such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and right to privacy were observed.

In analysing the quantitative data regarding the first specific objective, the researchers used descriptive statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation. These tools were used because the preliminary analysis indicated that the teachers are homogenous with regard to their understanding of inclusive education. Data regarding the second objective were analysed using linear multiple regression analysis with the help of Mplus 7 software. However, the qualitative data were analysed manually using open, axial and selective coding systems. First, the researchers identified and develop concepts and themes from the transcribed data in terms of their properties. These themes and concepts were connected to each other to make meaning out of the data. Based on the interconnections between the themes, the researchers selected central themes around which all the other sub-themes were integrated. These synchronisation and interconnection of sub-themes and themes were done symbolically to make meaning from the perspectives of parents with regard to disability and education of PWDs.

Results and Discussion

The first specific objective identified the level of *parents' and teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes toward SWSENs in AAK district*. The views of the teachers, as presented in Table 1 below, were analysed quantitatively while that of the parents were analysed qualitatively. As indicated in the table 1 below, teachers demonstrated positive knowledge toward a disability (Mean = 3.33, Std. Dev. = .588). This means teachers are familiar with a disability and are generally aware and also understand disability from an inclusive education perspective. Their high level of knowledge on a disability may be as a result of their gained experience and preservice preparation as professional teachers.

Table 1: Teachers' Knowledge, Beliefs, and Attitudes toward a Disability

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Knowledge	3.33	.588	-.692	.530
Attitudes	3.30	.362	-.545	1.755
Beliefs	2.39	.728	-.770	.145

Source: Field Survey, 2022. Where Std. Dev. = Standard deviation (N = 369)

The views of the teachers, as indicated in Table 1 above, are consistent with that of the parents. Most of the parents demonstrated positive knowledge toward a disability. Specifically, their submissions show that they have heard or read about disability and their own languages have certain definition for disability. They indicated high level of awareness and understanding of what a disability is. PMA1 said: *I think I have meaningful and significant level of awareness or familiarity about what a disability is. Most of my fact, situation or skills acquired, with regard to disability, are acquired through my personal experience and education.*

However, two of the female participants demonstrated poor knowledge of a disability. They had no idea of what causes disability and to them disability runs in families. Specifically, PFA2 avers that:

There is a family in my community with five children; and all these children are suffering from one or two disabilities, particularly regarding their movement. I think the family is cursed by the gods of the land. Therefore, they should consult the chief priest for guidance and solution, if not; it will follow the family from generation to generation. PFO1 also claims that: Disability runs in families and it is inherited. In some cases to it is caused by the witches and wizards in this community. They use them as horses to travel during the night... Even though I feel pity sometimes for PWDs, I must protect myself and my family from the wrath of the gods...

Overall, the results show that parents and teachers have high knowledge about a disability. That is, they are familiar, aware and understand what a disability is. Though, the teachers had high knowledge level about what a disability is as compared to the parents, their knowledge level in internalising behaviour of students with depression and impulsive tendencies was, however, low. The socio-cultural beliefs of the parents largely influence them not to embrace disability and inclusive education in general. A phenomenon which may boost major stakeholders' negative perceptions toward PWDs and the inclusion of SWSEs in our schools.

The findings that most teachers and parents have significant knowledge on what a disability is seem to support the submissions of Gyimah et al. (2010). Gyimah et al. assert that teachers in Ghana were generally positive towards the inclusion of SWSEs and disabilities. They added that teacher attitude towards inclusive education is greatly affected by training and education in special education, teacher knowledge and understanding of inclusion, and availability of support services.

However, the findings on parents and teachers knowledge on disability appear to be inconsistent with the comments of Vanderpuye (2013) and Bheenaveni (2016) who all indicated that stakeholders such as parents do not feel adequately knowledgeable to understand the functionality of a disability, what a disability is, and demands of SWSEs in mainstream schools. It is, perhaps, for this reason that Vanderpuye notes that it is difficult having a functional inclusive education in Ghana because of the different biological, behavioural and socio-cultural factors related to disability among parents in Ghana with regard to their perceptions, expectations and involvement.

Generally, teachers' high level of knowledge on what a disability is will be contributing to their meaningful achievement in an inclusive setting. This is so because their understanding of the sociology of a disability will help boost their acceptance level which will in turn help in improving the performance of all students. These assertions corroborate with the submission that having a better socio-cultural understanding of students with special needs could help teachers and other professionals meet the unique needs of SWSEs in the mainstream setting (Aboagye, 2020; Kpodoe, 2021).

Furthermore, the results from Table 1 above show that teachers show positive attitude toward a

disability (Mean = 3.30, Std. Dev. = .362). However, their socio-cultural and spiritual beliefs are perceived to be negative toward a disability (Mean = 2.39, Std. Dev. = .728). This shows that the teachers' awareness, outlook and reactions toward SWSEs are positive. However, their socio-cultural, emotional and spiritual sense of certainty and acceptance toward disability is perceived negatively. This means, their beliefs do not favour students who have challenges in performing some or all of the tasks of daily life. Ideally, people with positive beliefs toward SWSEs end up having positive attitude towards them, all other things being equal, and vice versa (Fazio, 1986; Gyimah et al., 2010). However, the finding on teachers' beliefs and attitudes contradicts this assumption.

The qualitative data obtained from the parents regarding their attitudes toward disability are seen largely to be incongruent with that of the teachers. The data show that few of the parents think it is a good idea for parents with a disabled child to have the hope that he or she will be cured. PMAs1 said: *I think PWDs should be allowed to have children provided it is medically possible. I think they are honest and hardworking. For example, in my shop I employed a disabled person and he is always punctual to work. He always sits in front of the shop. Before him, I employed three abled people and they were stealing and always coming to work late. I think those of them with higher level of education, particularly in Accounting and Auditing, are more productive in the area as compared to able Accountants or Auditors.*

However, most of the parents were of the view that they will not allow their children who are not disabled to marry persons with disabilities. Specifically, PMAb2 said: *Why will I allow my son who is able to marry a disabled person knowing the consequences on my family's future and prospects. As you know, we are royals in my community as a result, my child can one-day become a sub-chief or even the paramount chief. However, with a disabled wife, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the community to support his interest when the need be... In this community, PWDs are not allowed to lead or even get closer to the stool room.*

This shows that the customs and traditions of some Ghanaian communities do not conform to the laws and constitution of the country. For example, the passage of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715), which was considered as a remarkable breakthrough in Ghana's human rights discourse is perceived to be malfunctioning. This is so because some minority groups in Ghana are still seen not to be helping to improve the life of PWDs with regard to their rights, accessibility to public services, employment and education. Largely, this is due to non-easiness in the accessibility of public buildings and perception of some people. This situation is making it difficult for PWDs to be fully integrated in the mainstream society. PFAy1 also said:

For me I am afraid of disabled people, particularly those that look and behave like snakes... I am always not comfortable sitting together with them, particularly when I go to the hospital... When I sit next to them, it causes me anxiety. When asked whether PWDs should have children, PFAy1 said:

No! Those of them who are females usually get raped by some 'foolish' and 'cursed' men in our community. They usually get pregnant as a result of the rape, and give birth to nice looking children. However, I do not support the idea that they should have children, particularly those of them who cannot walk, farm or even bath on their own. Also, PMAs¹ avers that:

Most public facilities are not friendly to people with disability. Even our public transport system is not designed to include them. However, in relation to their leadership positions in this community, with regard to being the king or queen mother, I support the belief that they should not be allowed to take traditional leadership positions. This is so because there are some roles, duties and activities that kings or queen mothers are expected to perform on their own; however, PWDs such as vision impairment cannot perform such activities.

Deductions from the results revealed that there is inconsistency in the views of parents and teachers with regard to their attitudes toward a disability. Most teachers have positive perception, attitude, and reactions toward PWDs and SWSEs while most parents have negative attitudes toward PWDs. These differences may be as a result of their socio-cultural differences and orientations. Most of the parents appeared to have been engulfed in the customs and traditions of AAK district while most of the teachers are from other communities outside the district as a result are not well socialised with the customs and traditions of the area, and also do not accept some practices emanating from the various communities within the district.

The positive pattern in the disposition of educators towards PWDs and SWSEs upholds Dukmak's (2013) avowal that most instructors are frequently able to acknowledge minor disabilities. This is so on the grounds that students with extreme disability present genuine difficulties to them. They find it troublesome, tedious and disappointing while taking care of them, subsequently representing the demeanour a few educators depict towards them. Also, the finding that teachers have inspiring perspective toward SWSEs is consistent with that of Gyimah et al. (2010) and Kpodoe (2021), who all indicated that teachers in Ghana were generally positive towards the inclusion of SWSEs and disabilities. According to Gyimah et al. (2010), teachers greatest concern, however, was with children with sensory disabilities (that is the deaf and blind) and severe to profound intellectual difficulties.

Contrary to the submissions of Gyimah et al. (2010) and Kpodoe (2021), Lopes et al. (2014) posit that it is challenging for instructors to acknowledge SWSEs, and lay out solid social bonds with them. Assuming educators concur that SWSEs should be instructed in the standard school where variations are to be made for them, then, at that point, they challenge the thought that inclusivity in training can possibly significantly influence the general atmosphere of teaching.

The views of the teachers regarding their socio-cultural and spiritual beliefs, as indicted earlier, show that they have negative beliefs toward disability. The views of the teachers are consistent with that of the parents. Overall, the parents also express dysfunctional beliefs toward a disability. Specifically, PFO2 said:

I do not think blindness is natural, I think it is a manmade disease caused by witches and wizards. I think disabilities are some of the punishments that the gods give to people or families that disobey them. Similarly, PMAy1 also said: I think people born with disability(ies) are cursed by the gods. Some people have sex in their farms or forest, a practice forbidden by the gods. Therefore, in such situations the gods may punish that person or family by giving them a disabled child. In some cases, families or individuals are attacked spiritually by their enemies or people who are jealous of them. In such cases, they usually afflict them with diseases such as disabilities for the family or such individuals to suffer until their death. However, PFA1 asserts that ideally:

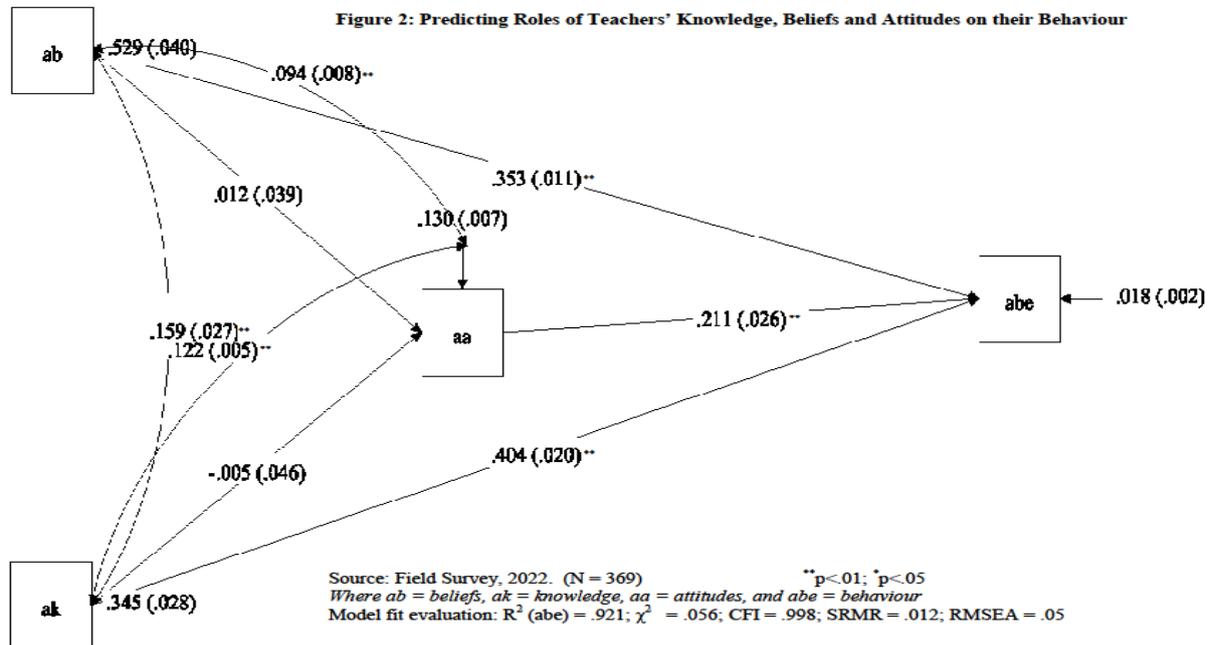
Most families in this community, including my own, do not embrace PWDs as expected; I do not think they subject them to degrading treatment. The findings regarding teachers' attitudes are consistent with that of Gyimah et al. (2010) who found out that teachers in Ghana were generally positive towards the inclusion of SWSEs and disabilities. Also, the findings that parents and teachers have negative socio-cultural and spiritual beliefs toward PWDs and SWSEs are congruent with that of Boakye-Akomea (2015) who avers that in Ghana equal rights are to be extended to all citizens regardless of their status.

However, the reality regarding inclusive education in Ghana, particularly within public basic schools, seems not to be meeting the expectations of policy makers. This is largely as a result of lack of resources and the negative socio-cultural practices of some stakeholders in Ghana. According to Kpodoe (2021), both human and material resources of the schools do not support SWSEs and PWDs in general. Kpodoe added that in most cultural settings in Ghana and other developing countries, disabled persons are perceived to be inferior and are generally seen as objects of pity.

The second specific objective *found out the potential influence of lack of parents' and teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes on their behaviour regarding the education of children with a disability.* Quite apart from analysing the impact of the independent variables on the criterion variable quantitatively, the researchers also examined the mediating role of attitudes on the influence knowledge and beliefs combined have on behaviour toward a disability. The quantitative results are presented pictorially in Figure 2.

As depicted in Figure 2, teachers' knowledge (40.4%), beliefs (35.3%) and attitudes (21.1%) have statistically significant positive contributions to their behaviour towards the education of children with disabilities. The total contribution recorded was 92.1 percent with $p < .001$. However, teachers' knowledge ($\beta = -.005$ (.046), $p = .913$) and beliefs ($\beta = .012$ (.039), $p = .767$) have no statistically significant influence on their attitudes. Again, the results show that teachers' attitudes do not mediate the relationship between knowledge and beliefs combined and behaviour towards the education of children with disabilities. This shows that teachers' socio-cultural, emotional and spiritual sense of certainty and acceptance by the mind that one's inability to perform some or all of the tasks of daily life is true or real; their familiarity, general awareness or understanding of a disability gained through experience or study; and their insight, outlook, and reactions toward SWSEs are able

to influenced significantly and positively the way their emotions are expressed towards the education of SWSEs and PWDs in general.



The findings that emerged from Figure 2 seem to be consistent with that of the qualitative data. Deductions from the views of the parents show that when they have adequate knowledge about what a disability is, it translate into their belief systems that favour disability, and positive feeling, opinion and reactions toward disability. These dynamics are able to help parents demonstrate and express positive emotions towards the education of children with disabilities.

Again, the findings suggest that knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of people largely influence directly their behaviour towards the education of SWSEs and PWDs; and that the relationship is direct and not indirect as proposed in the model (Figure 1). In line with the congruence in the views of teachers and parents, the researchers would argue that having good knowledge on disability, and having positive beliefs and attitudes towards PWDs, might be considered as stimulators to promoting positive behaviours toward the education of SWSEs and PWDs. The findings are consistent with the comments of Picard (2015) who posts that both parents and teachers have their beliefs and value systems which to a large extent influence their actions in the operationalization and implementation of inclusive schooling. Their behaviour toward a disability is largely shaped by their knowledge of what a disability is, their belief, values, and attitudes (Fazio, 1986; Gyimah et al., 2010; Picard, 2015).

Again, the findings support the assumption of self-efficacy theory, which posits that the variations in people's collaborativeness (personal factors), their behaviour, and their socio-cultural setting are validated by mutual determinism of their behaviour. This means, parents and teachers' attitude towards SWSEs is dependent on their ability to understand the concept of a disability within their socio-cultural context. The primary precept of the concept is that the perception of parents and teachers and their socio-cultural, emotional and

spiritual beliefs toward SWSEs affect how they behave towards them. Furthermore, the findings are congruent with the assertion that our knowledge, attitudes and culture, which shape our beliefs and values, influence our behaviour towards SWSEs and PWDs (Bheenaveni, 2016; Fazio, 1986; Gyimah et al., 2010; Kpodoe, 2021). Peoples' beliefs and values (correct or wrong) constitute their attitude that may in turn affect their behaviour. Also, the findings corroborate with that of Kpodoe (2021) who found that teachers' attitude towards students with disability is able to predict their positive behaviour towards them.

Conclusions

The study concluded that teachers and parents in AAK district of the Central Region of Ghana have substantial knowledge on what a disability is. However, in relation to their attitudes, teachers demonstrated attitudes that are eufunctional to the survival and development of SWSEs and PWDs while parents showed attitudes that seem to be dysfunctional to their development. Again, the study concludes that both parents and teachers have been socialised and internalised with negative socio-cultural, emotional and spiritual sense of certainty and acceptance of one's inability to perform some or all tasks of daily life. Even though current practices in Ghana do not accept negative practices toward SWSEs and PWDs, some of the customs and traditions in the various communities within the district continue to hamper the planning and implementation of effective inclusive schooling in the area.

Finally, the study concludes that parents and teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes combined are able to substantially predict their positive behaviours toward the education of SWSEs and PWDs in general because these knowledge, beliefs and attitudes are functional to the survival of all in the larger community. Disability is not inability, hence, the need for the people of AAK district to have positive attitudes and socio-cultural and spiritual beliefs towards SWSEs and PWDs in general. Both parents and teachers in the various communities within AAK district need to be oriented and trained to be sensitive and to respect the acceptable customs, traditions, norms and beliefs of the country, guided by the 1992 constitution of Ghana. This dynamics will aid in forming positive behaviour toward SWSEs and PWDs as a whole, a situation that can help enhance their learning, self-confidence and perceived desirability in both the micro (school) and macro (community) societies.

Recommendations

In line with the findings that both teachers and parents have negative socio-cultural and spiritual beliefs toward PWDs, it is recommended to management of the District Education Directorate to:

1. Constantly organise sensitisation and advocacy programmes for members of the various PTAs and family-heads to positively change their negative socio-cultural and spiritual beliefs toward PWDs;
2. Help parents and other members of the society to promote the rights of PWDs for better inclusiveness in the educational system;

3. Design intervention that shall help parents, teachers, and other members of the communities to become more knowledgeable regarding the essential rights of PWDs;
4. Help teachers, in particular, to rise above individual prejudices and partialities in order to stimulate the well-being of all their students;
5. Organise regular in-service training and workshops for teachers on Sociology of Special Education and its related issues, particularly to newly qualified teachers to enable them to have adequate knowledge about the socio-cultural conditions of SWSENs and PWDs;
6. Collaborate with National Commission for Civic Education to factor in the re-orientation and re-socialisation of parents and teachers in AAK district in their annual sensitisation and education programmes by focusing on issues of discrimination against SWSENs and PWDs. Such public education should be done in collaboration with the chiefs, GES and selected NGOs.

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