# Challenges of, and Coping Strategies Employed by, Students with Visual Impairments in South Eastern States of Nigeria

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## Abstract

*The aim of this research was to identify the major challenges and preferred coping strategies of students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria. The descriptive survey method was employed for the study with 120 students with visual impairment who were drawn using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Two research questions were generated while four hypotheses were tested at 0.5 level of significance. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Mean and rank order and t-test statistical tools were used to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed that students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools faced challenges such as negative cultural/traditional belief system and obstruction by many architectural barriers among others. The preferred coping strategies were: ignoring comments and attitudes directed at them by the society; and relying on tap-recorded materials for daily transmission. Age and gender did not influence the challenges but affected the preferred coping strategies. The researchers recommend that stakeholders consider addressing these challenges through advocacy, education and counselling; class teachers should provide lasting experiences to all students irrespective of age and gender, and both male and female students should be exposed to different coping strategies that may suit their peculiar needs.*

## Introduction

Education is a fundamental right for every child irrespective of whether the child has disability or not. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) stated that every Nigerian child has the right to equal education irrespective of any real or imagined disability. Education is a process of developing the capacity and potential of the individual so as to prepare that individual to be successful in life (Oyekan, 2006). Education, especially quality and functional education, is an important means of developing a person. Aide Action (2004) argued that without education, individuals with severe visual impairment and other special needs will never be able to deal with the effects of their disabilities, improve their daily living skills, acquire autonomy, achieve a high level of knowledge, and lead a normal and decent life that every human being deserves.

According to Ndungu'u (2011) vision is fundamental to learning. Ndungu'u observed that when a child has visual impairment, the ability to receive information from the world around them

would be limited, and this would have negative effects on the child's ability to understand concepts, learn language, and move about freely with confidence. Eyesight is the window to the world for individuals to see, to perceive, to comprehend, to express, and to communicate (Chelsea, 2011). Through vision information about movement, form, depth, distance, space, colour, texture, and shape is acquired (Miller, 1996). The information gained is used to recognize objects, copy actions, build visual memories, and develop spatial awareness. It therefore, follows that lack or limited vision will affect a person's abilities in relation to all these functions (Suubi, 2013).

Visual impairment is a low incidence disability (Davis, 2003) and therefore affects a relatively small proportion of the world's population. Visual impairment is an umbrella term used to describe various eye disorders. These include common eye disorders that can easily be identified. For instance, blindness, refractive errors, and many uncommon types of eye disorders such as cortical blindness, colour blindness, night blindness, among others. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2012) described visual impairment as impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's education. This includes partial sightedness and blindness. It is a significant loss of vision even though the person may wear corrective lenses.

WHO (2012) estimated that 19 million children worldwide have visual impairment. Twelve million children out of this number are a result of refractive errors. Regrettably, 1.4 million children are irreversibly blind (WHO, 2012). In Nigeria, the specific number of children with visual impairment is not known. This is because there is no nationally approved data on prevalence and causes of blindness in the country (Nigerian National Blindness and Visual Impairment Survey, 2005-2007). The increasing cases of visual impairment among the youth should be a concern to everybody. Based on Nigerian population estimate of 140 million people and using the epidemiological model of estimating disability in developing countries, 10% (14 million) would have one disability or another (Ajobiewe, 2008). Ajobiewe also estimated that two million out of the 14 million have visual impairment and that about 250,000 individuals with visual impairment are of school-age. However, quoting the Federal Ministry of Education, Ajobiewe indicated that less than 6% (<15,000) of this population attended school while others were out of school for different reasons.

One of the strategies for educating individuals with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States and Nigeria in general is integration. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013) described integration as the most appropriate form of special education. The NPE defined integration as the education of children with or without disabilities in the same school and classroom. It is believed that educating children with or without disabilities together will provide an opportunity for both to understand one another better and therefore, reduce the incidences of separation, segregation and discrimination, some of which are a result of unfounded beliefs, traditions, and cultures. Integration was introduced in 1960 by the British Commonwealth society for the Blind in today's Katsina State as open education. The scheme that started in Katsina later spread to other areas like Kano, Oji-River and Ibadon (Ozoji, 2008). The outbreak of the Nigerian civil war disrupted the exercise.

However, when the Universal Primary Education policy was launched in 1976, many children with visual impairment were enrolled in regular schools. The emergence of the National Policy on Education, which is Government official policy on education, saw the inclusion of special education. The policy prescribed integration/mainstreaming as the most appropriate form of special education (NPE, 2013). The document further stated that all necessary facilities that would ensure easy access to education would be provided by government. Examples of such facilities are inclusive education or integration of special classes and units into ordinary/public schools. It is important to note that though Nigeria is one of the countries that embraced inclusive education, it has no mandatory enforcement law; hence, no serious attention is given to practical inclusion. Rather, integration continues to gain ground. The situation in most integrated secondary schools is not encouraging. Students with visual impairment are merely placed in regular schools without fulfilling the necessary conditions for placement.

Integration has principles and procedures that need to be followed for successful school outcomes for all students. These procedures are visibly absent and students with disabilities are treated as every other child forgetting that their success in the regular school depends on adaptation of materials and human resources. Attitudes of teachers, administrators, students and

others are not accommodative enough (Ozoji, 2008). The removal of appropriate subjects from the curriculum of secondary school has made many students with visual impairment unable to opt for further studies. Subjects such as Braille, typing, daily living skills, mobility and orientation, that are appropriate for students with visual impairment are absent from the curriculum.

Other factors like environmental and architectural barriers where classrooms are built upstairs and windows open outside would only lead to further barriers and frustration. This is because some of the architectural designs are not disability friendly. Sunlkumari (2009) sampled 100 students who had visual impairment from two integrated schools and discovered that 52% had orientation and mobility problems, 34% showed poor academic performance, 24% had difficulties in carrying out daily living skills, and 71% had social problems. This shows that students with visual impairment in regular schools generally face many challenges and difficulties in pursuit of education and because of these difficulties the students develop various coping strategies.

Wayne, Sonia, and Joel (2001) described coping strategies as conscious and rational ways for dealing with the anxieties of life. Coping strategies are often categorized into active and passive (avoidance) coping strategies. Active coping refers to gaining control over stressful situations while passive (avoidance) coping means disengaging from stressful situations. Coping is often personalized and depends on the nature and prevailing situations (Jacob & Shetty, 2015). Therefore, when in crises an individual is likely to fall on the solution he or she knows best. Coping strategies in the context of this research, therefore, are those efforts and behaviours designed and used by students who have visual impairment in the South-Eastern States to address the difficulties/barriers imposed by visual limitation in pursuit of their education.

Jacob and Shetty (2015) noted that Folkman and Lazarus (2000) developed various coping strategies and measures in order to determine how people cope with various life events, but little information is available for students with visual impairment**.** This study was therefore, designed to identify major challenges faced by students with visual impairment, in the regular secondary schools in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria, and the preferred coping strategies they use.

**Statement of the Problem**

All children go through different developmental stages that have their own opportunities and obstacles but individual with visual impairment seem to face additional challenges while they progress through childhood years. These challenges include coordination difficulties, emotional stress, difficulty learning in a traditional setting, and organizational challenges (Chelsea, 2011). Mba (1995) documented that children with special needs in Nigeria were not receiving adequate attention educationally. Agomoh (2006) found that some of the challenges affecting the education of individuals with visual impairment in South-Eastern States were due to inadequate provision of essential facilities, equipment, materials and poor funding while Adelowo (2006) found lack of adequate professional expertise at all levels, inadequate human resources, weak curriculum design, and lack of adequate information among others, as some of the challenges affecting the education of individuals with visual impairment in Nigeria. Placing students with visual impairment in the regular secondary schools is neither integration nor inclusion. Integration or inclusion entails that the people who are being integrated are provided with the necessary supports to enable them to function effectively in the regular schools. The absence of adaptive and assistive devices has undermined the aims of regular school placement.

There is limited research focusing on the coping strategies of students with visual impairment. This study is therefore, important in order to advance knowledge on the education of individuals with visual impairment. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the challenges faced by students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria?
2. What are the coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria?
3. Does age influence the challenges faced, and the coping strategies used, by students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States?
4. Does gender influence the challenges faced, and the coping strategies used, by students with visual impairment in South-Eastern States?

Table 1

*Prevalence of Visual Impairment in South-Eastern States*

| States | Total No. of People with Visual Impairment | Estimated School Age |
|---|---|---|
| * Abia | 28,890 | 2,889 |
| * Anambra | 37,472 | 3,747 |
| Ebonyi | 24,672 | 2,467 |
| Enugu | 27,271 | 2,727 |
| * Imo | 31,955 | 3,195 |
| Total | 150,260 | 15,026 |

Source: *National Bureau of Statistics, Abuja (2006)*

## Method

### *Design*

The research design for this study is the descriptive research survey. The descriptive survey involves gathering information on people's opinion, beliefs, attitude, motivation and behaviour (Akuezilo & Agu, 2003).

### *Participants and Sampling*

The population for this study consisted of all school-aged children who had visual impairment in the five States of the South-Eastern Nigeria (i.e., Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo). The sample comprised all children with visual impairment in the three purposively selected States in South-Eastern Nigeria namely: Abia, Anambra, and Imo States (see Table 1). Simple random, purposive and captive sampling procedures were used in selecting the study sample. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting three states out of five states of South-East geo-political zone. This was achieved by using the 'deep-hat' method. The name of each state in the geo-political zone was written on a sheet of paper, and was neatly wrapped, then placed in an opaque container. Thereafter, three States were picked randomly from the container.

At the second stage, the researcher purposively selected all the secondary schools from each of the three states where students with visual impairment were placed. Finally, students with visual impairment were sampled from each of the selected schools using captive sampling method. Given (2008) describes captive population as participant who found themselves in a context where they are constrained as dependent of others for their case and for access to them as research participants, usually because of their physical or organizational proximity. Captive method means capturing all those present at the time data were collected. This resulted in a sample size of 120.

### *Instrumentation*

The instrument used for collecting data for this study is a self-designed questionnaire tagged "Challenges and Coping Strategies of Visual Impairment Questionnaire" (CCSOVIQ). The questionnaire has three sections (A, B & C). Section A comprises demographic information about the respondents. Section B comprised 20 items based on the research questions raised for the challenges of students with visual impairment, while Section C comprised 20 items raised for the coping strategies employed by students with visual impairments. A four-point Scale questionnaire was provided to elicit responses from the participants. The instrument was given to five experts in the Department of Counsellor Education who vetted it independently to establish its face and content validity. Their feedback led to the modifications of the instrument to suit the intended respondents. The reliability of the instrument was determined using a test-retest procedure. Twenty questionnaires were administered to twenty students with visual impairment in Zamfara State (6 students) and Sokoto State (14 students). After an interval of four weeks, the instrument was re-administered to the same set of respondents. The two sets of scores were correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC). A correlation coefficient of 0.68 was derived which showed that the instrument was reliable enough to work with.

Table 2

*Distribution of Participants by Age*

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 12 – 19 years | 63 | 52.5 |
| 20 years and above | 57 | 47.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |

Table 3

*Distribution of Participants by Gender*

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 75 | 62.5 |
| Female | 45 | 37.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100.0 |

## Results

### *Demographic Information*

This section presents the results of data obtained from the respondents in frequency count and percentage.

Table 2 indicates that 63(52.5%) of the respondents were between the ages of 12 – 19 years, while 57(47.5%) of the respondents were 20 years and older.

Table 3 indicates that out of the 120 respondents that participated in the study 75(62.5%) were males, while 45(37.5%) were females.

*Research Question 1.* What are the challenges faced by students with Visual impairment in South-Eastern States of Nigeria?

Table 4 indicates challenges of students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria. Sixteen out of the 20 items had mean scores above the mid-mean score of 2.50. These, therefore, represented the major challenges faced by students with visual-impairment integrated into the regular school system in the South-Eastern States.

*Research Question 2.* What are the coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria?

Table 5 indicates the preferred coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria. These are less preferred coping strategies. However, since only seven out of the 20 items had mean scores above the mid-mean score of 2.50, they were regarded as the most preferred coping strategies.

*Research Question 3:* Does age influence the challenges faced, and the coping strategies used by students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States?

Table 6 indicates a calculated *t*-value of 0.39 and a Critical *t*-value of 1.96. Since the Calculated *t*-value was less than the Critical *t*-value, the researchers concluded that there was no significant difference in the challenges of students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States based on age.

Table 7 indicates a calculated *t*-value of 2.01 and a critical *t*-value of 1.96. Since the calculated *t*-value is greater than the Critical *t*-value, the concluded that there was a significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States based on age.

*Research Question 4*. Does gender influence the challenges faced and the coping strategies used by students with visual impairment in South-Eastern States?

Table 8 indicates a calculated *t*-value of 0.84 and a critical *t*-value of 1.96. Since the calculated *t*-value is less than the critical *t*-value, the researchers concluded that there was no significant difference in the challenges faced by students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States based on gender.

Table 9 indicates a calculated *t*-value of 2.81 and a critical *t*-value of 1.96. Since the calculated *t*-value is greater than the critical *t*-value, the researchers concluded that there was a significant difference in the coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States based on gender.

## Discussion

The main focus of this research was to identify the major challenges and the preferred coping strategies of students with visual impairments in regular secondary schools in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria and to determine if age and gender had any influence on both challenges and coping strategies. On the age distribution, the researches revealed that, the greater percentage of the participants were between the ages of 12 to 19 years. This is quite unexpected because earlier research (Agomoh, 2006, Ayoku, 2006, & Ajobiewe, 2008) revealed that visual impairment reduces the chances of the individual being in the

Table 4

*Mean Ratings of Challenges of Students with Visual Impairment*

| S/ N | As a Student with visual impairment, I face the following challenges: | Mean |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Negative cultural/ traditional beliefs about blind people. | 3.75 |
| 2 | Low expectation about visually-impaired persons from sighted people leading to people taking decision on my behalf. | 3.70 |
| 3 | Too many architectural barriers. | 3.63 |
| 4 | Inadequate governmental support for the education of the visually-impaired. | 3.62 |
| 5 | Learning without appropriate facilities such as Braille textbooks. | 3.45 |
| 6 | Lack of institutional support for the visually-impaired | 3.40 |
| 7 | Difficulty getting admission for further studies. | 3.35 |
| 8 | Learning without adequate modern educational facilities for the visually-impaired. | 3.25 |
| 9 | Being taught by teachers who could only use conventional method of teaching. | 3.23 |
| 10 | Difficulty in making friends. | 3.13 |
| 11 | Taught by teachers who are non-specialists in the subject matters. | 3.03 |
| 12 | Non-availability of resource room for improved learning. | 2.77 |
| 13 | Unfriendly attitude of some teachers. | 2.72 |
| 14 | Poor educational facilities for the visually-impaired. | 2.66 |
| 15 | High cost of education for the visually-impaired. | 2.61 |
| 16 | Dealing with daily doubts by sighted people about the ability of the visually-impaired. | 2.53 |
| 17 | Inadequate number of Braille specialist. | 2.47 |
| 18 | Lack of specialists in daily living skills. | 2.20 |
| 19 | Lack of modern mobility and orientation aids. | 2.05 |
| 20 | No extra-time consideration in all public examinations. | 1.85 |

Table 5

*Mean Ratings of Coping Strategies of Students with Visual Impairment*

| S/N | **As a student with visual impairment, I cope with challenges by:** | Mean |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Being motivated by the achievements of other visually- impaired students | 2.95 |
| 2 | Ignoring negative comments directed at me from sighted members of the society. | 2.82 |
| 3 | Ignoring negative attitudes directed at me from sighted members of the society. | 2.79 |
| 4 | Relying on tape recorded materials for daily transmission. | 2.71 |
| 5 | Listening to motivational and inspirational talks on tape. | 2.64 |
| 6 | Using sighted guide to move around. | 2.57 |
| 7 | Relying on local cues to understand the environment. | 2.53 |
| 8 | Performing to the best of my ability. | 2.48 |
| 9 | Making do with the facilities that are available. | 2.45 |
| 10 | Learning to do daily living activities myself. | 2.37 |
| 11 | Relying on family members for home support. | 2.33 |
| 12 | Relying on family members for environmental support. | 2.23 |
| 13 | Relying on sighted friends to put me through when i did not understand non-specialist teachers. | 2.19 |
| 14 | Aspiring to be independent. | 2.17 |
| 15 | Interacting freely with others | 2.15 |
| 16 | My assignments and exams for sighted teachers. | 2.10 |
| 17 | Taking private lessons in difficult subjects. | 2.08 |
| 18 | Using computer and other gadgets. | 2.05 |
| 19 | Reading printed textbooks and other materials with sighted colleague. | 1.93 |
| 20 | Taking alcoholic drinks to cool off. | 1.80 |

Table 6

*Mean and t-test Statistics on Challenges Faced by Students with Visual Impairment Based on Age*

| Age | N | Mean | SD | df | Cal. t-value | Crit. t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 – 19 years | 63 | 49.51 | 5.92 | 118 | 0.39 | 1.96 |
| 20 years and above | 57 | 49.17 | 6.32 | | | |

Table 7

*Coping Strategies used by Students with Visual Impairment Based on Age*

| Age | N | Mean | SD | df | Cal. t-value | Crit. t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 – 19 years | 63 | 50.21 | 4.11 | 118 | 2.01* | 1.96 |
| 20 years and above | 57 | 53.72 | 7.53 | | | |

*Significant, p<0.05

Table 8

*Challenges Faced by Students with Visual Impairment*

| Gender | N | Mean | SD | Df | Cal. t-value | Crit. t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 68 | 46.64 | 3.62 | 118 | 0.84 | 1.96 |
| Female | 52 | 46.07 | 3.71 | | | |

Table 9

*Coping Strategies used by Students with Visual Impairment*

| Gender | N | Mean | SD | Df | Cal. t-value | Crit. t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 68 | 35.14 | 5.76 | 118 | 2.81* | 1.96 |
| Female | 52 | 34.26 | 5.97 | | | |

*Significant, p<0.05

same class with their age mates without visual impairment. Invariably, such a person would always be in a class that is below their age mates—being too old in the class. However, this particular result is indicative of the fact that more families of children with visual impairment were embracing early education of their children with visual impairment that is why individuals with visual impairment in the secondary schools were more of the same age with their non-visual impaired counterparts. This goes to support Iroegbu's (2007) observation that nursery education can reduce the age gap between individuals with visual impairment and those without.

The result on gender distribution indicated that there were more male than female participants in the study. The low enrolment of females with visual impairment in schools generally may be associated with the perceived fear by parents that female students with impaired vision may not be able to cope well with rigors of academic activities in the regular school system. Durosaro (2010) made a similar observation that fear of being harmed, abused or even raped by either students or teachers may be responsible for the low enrolment of females with visual impairment in the schools. Sometimes too, parents may feel ashamed of being associated with such a situation hence they prefer to "imprison" their girl-children with visual impairment (Jurmang & Jurmang, 2014), not because of any crime but just to move them away from the sight of the public. The need for public enlightenment and education becomes very necessary for parents and families at large to understand the power of educating individuals with visual impairment.

The first research question, which was analyzed using rank order revealed that negative culture and belief system about people with visual impairment, low expectation, architectural barriers, and inadequate government support for the education of the visually-impaired still constituted major challenges in the regular schools. In a similar study, Agomoh (2006) found that students with visual impairment in the eastern part of the country also experienced similar challenges like culture, doubting the ability of students with visual impairment, and government insensitivity to education of the individuals with visual impairment. Culture is a powerful ingredient of the social system. It includes the belief system, values, and knowledge of and about the people. Getting similar results shows that the culture was still undiluted and this affects the development of special needs education. A lot of advocacy and awareness campaign is required so that all stakeholders in the education of individuals with visual impairment in the South-Eastern States should fulfill their responsibilities of providing conducive learning environments for students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools.

The preferred coping strategies employed by students with visual impairment are as shown in the mean ratings in Table 5. They are considered inadequate because only 35% of the items were highly preferred coping strategies while 65% of the items were not highly preferred coping strategies. Limiting oneself to a few coping strategies may mean that there may be certain things that the individual may not be able to do. A wide variety of coping strategies would be more beneficial to students with visual impairment because Lazarus and Folkman (2000) observed that coping is not just a fixed set of strategies that has to be used whenever needed but depends on the situation being faced. Olson, McElheron and Pilorget (2011) identified wide ranges of personal coping strategies that could be employed by individuals with visual impairment. It is probably correct to assume that lack of specialist teachers/instructors to handle unique subjects such as Braille, mobility and orientation, communication, skills of daily living and so on, may have accounted for the use of few coping strategies by these students. Unique subjects contain supportive and technological devices developed to assist in teaching-learning tasks (Iroegbu, 2007), which could develop appropriate coping behaviours.

The *t*-test computation on the challenges of visual impairment based on age showed that age did not in any way influence the challenges faced by students with visual impairment in regular schools in the South-Eastern States. In other words, no matter the age, these challenges were the same. Castellano (2010) made a similar conclusion that irrespective of age, the challenges of students with visual impairment in high school were similar in nature. However, it differs from Anumonye's (1978) earlier finding that age may affect some of these challenges. Anumonye's position may have been influenced by the sample for his study which was drawn from a private primary school in Lagos State. It is possible that pupils in this primary school were brought in there at a very early age and of course congenitally blind without visual memories. For those with acquired visual impairment in secondary school, the challenges are still there but the severity may differ. This is because, since the unique subjects are excluded in the curriculum of secondary school, some of the special skills may not be known to them or may have been forgotten. These underscore the need for continuous training on these special subjects and skills. The emergence of information and communication technology would have changed the situation today. There are many resources today that can enhance learning thus, leading to a better understanding of the environment.

The computed *t*-test on the challenges on visual impairment based on age indicated that age influenced the coping strategies employed by

students with visual impairment in regular schools in the South-Eastern States. Scott (2009) found that age affects the style of coping adopted by high school students with visual impairment. This is because the maturation and experiences at the college level would have provided enough experience to most students; hence, they use varied coping strategies. Also, many of the students have acquired cases of visual impairment, which means they had visual memories that when added to maturation and experience would expose them to different types of coping strategies.

The *t*-test computation on hypothesis three revealed that there was no significant difference in the challenges faced when compared with gender, implying that both males and females faced similar challenges in their educational pursuit. While Suubi, (2013) seems to agree that many educational challenges in most cases were not gender-biased, Durosaro (2010) revealed that physical, verbal, emotional and psychological violence (challenges) may be experienced by both male and female, but sexual violence (challenge) is exclusive to female students. To further support the peculiarity of challenges between genders, Olaribigbe (2014) reported that a majority of the respondents were totally against the use of guide canes by ladies with visual impairment in Oyo State. The change in the result many not be unconnected with the level of awareness, exposure, and culture and belief system which the people were not ready to drop.

The *t*-test on hypothesis four revealed there was a difference in the coping strategies employed by male and female students with visual impairment. The differences may be partly due to exposure and participation. The male individuals with visual impairment were exposed to various activities. Participation in some of the activities provided opportunities to develop more effective strategies to cope with. Supporting the finding, Siu and Watkins (1997) agreed that girls were more likely to use social support than boys. Ptacek, Smith and Zanas (1992) also found more problem-focused coping in men and more support-seeking and emotional-focused responses in women. Social support seeking, which is linked to the female involves seeking help from others while problem-focus associated with the male entails tackling problems head long. Efforts should be made to teach individuals with visual impairment how to develop appropriate coping strategies that suit individual problems.

## Conclusion

Students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in the South-Eastern States of Nigeria were faced with difficult challenges. These challenges affected the students and limited their effective school performance physically, socially, emotionally, and economically. Coping is often personalized and depends on the nature and quality of the prevailing support and opportunities. It is important to provide special attention to children with visual impairment in regular classrooms so as to mitigate the effect of visual loss to enable them to function properly. This study concluded that students with visual impairment had major challenges such as negative cultural/traditional belief systems, which resulted in students with visual impairment being treated with less regard by either their peers or teachers. School personnel expected less from the students with visual impairment. The preferred coping strategies identified included being motivated by the achievements of other students with visual impairment, listening to motivational and inspirational talks on tape, and associating with those who agreed to interact with them. It was also discovered that age and gender did not influence the challenges faced by students with visual impairment; however, age and gender influenced the coping strategies.

Considering the enormity of the challenges faced by students with visual impairment in regular secondary schools in the Eastern states of Nigeria and the need for more preferred coping strategies, it is imperative that counselling programmes should cover more areas of rehabilitation counselling in order to give more support to students with visual impairment. This is because, producing counsellors with deeper knowledge in counselling students with visual impairment will provide the necessary services needed by these students in regular secondary schools to address the challenges and barriers to successful school performance.

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