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EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AMONG CHILDREN LIVING WITH DISABILITIES IN ABUJA MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL, NIGERIA

By

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Abstract
Children living with disabilities in Nigeria continue to encounter denial of school admission, classroom segregation, lack of special education support, absence of inclusive teaching aids and frequent school absenteeism, and these experiences carry consequences for their psychological wellbeing that remain under researched at the local government level. The objective of the study was to determine how educational exclusion generates Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. A cross sectional survey design was adopted, combining questionnaires and in depth interviews. A sample size of 396 respondents was determined from a population of 2,325 children receiving services across 13 agencies in AMAC using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, and respondents were selected through a stratified sampling technique with proportional allocation across the agencies. Twenty participants, comprising children, caregivers, teachers, administrators and disability support personnel, were purposively selected for in depth interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Multiple regression results showed that educational exclusion significantly generated PTSD among children living with disabilities ($R = 0.854$, $R^2 = 0.729$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.724$, $F = 159.707$, $p < 0.05$), with frequent school absenteeism recording the strongest contribution, followed by school admission denial, absence of inclusive teaching aids, lack of special education support and classroom segregation. Qualitative accounts from teachers, counsellors and welfare personnel corroborated the quantitative pattern, describing flashbacks, emotional numbness, irritability, sleep disturbance and avoidance behaviour among affected children. The study concludes that educational exclusion remains a significant driver of traumatic stress among children living with disabilities in AMAC and recommends that educational institutions strengthen inclusive learning structures through disability sensitive teaching methods, accessible learning materials, classroom participation support and emotional counselling services.

Keywords: educational exclusion, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, children living with disabilities, mental health, Abuja Municipal Area Council

Introduction
Social exclusion describes a condition in which individuals or groups are systematically denied access to rights, resources and participation in the normal affairs of society, and it encompasses barriers that prevent people from benefiting equally from services, relationships and institutions (Anbor, 2022). Among the different forms this exclusion takes, educational exclusion is seen in policies and practices that deny or hinder access to formal learning, whether through denial of admission, segregation within classrooms, absence of inclusive

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teaching aids, lack of special education support or repeated school absenteeism forced upon a child by hostile learning conditions (Terseer & Gani, 2021). When left unaddressed, this form of exclusion deprives children of the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the one setting most responsible for shaping their sense of belonging and competence, and this cost falls hardest on children living with disabilities (Bulama & Ikyaator, 2020).

Educational exclusion refers to the lack of access to inclusive learning environments, materials or trained teachers for children with disabilities. It is reflected through denial of admission on the basis of disability, placement in segregated classrooms rather than mainstream settings, absence of assistive teaching aids and specialised learning materials, lack of trained special education personnel and irregular school attendance driven by prior negative experiences rather than by choice (Terseer & Gani, 2021). In this article, educational exclusion is conceptualised through five specific indicators, namely school admission denial, lack of special education support, classroom segregation, absence of inclusive teaching aids and frequent school absenteeism.

Children living with disabilities are those aged 0 to 18 years who experience functional limitations in physical, mental, sensory or intellectual capacity, limitations that may impair their ability to perform age appropriate tasks or participate fully in social, educational or recreational activities (Onoja & Dimas, 2020). Some of these children are born with their impairments while others acquire them through injury, illness or malnutrition, and many rely on caregivers for assistance with daily tasks and additional learning support (Tyodzua, 2021). Across sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, a large number of children with disabilities remain hidden by their families to avoid societal shame, and only a small fraction of those identified ever attend school or receive inclusive educational services (World Health Organization, 2020; UNICEF, 2021).

Children living with disabilities are understood in this article as those who experience physical, sensory, intellectual or emotional limitations that restrict their ability to interact with their environment without support. This understanding includes both visible and invisible conditions and is shaped as much by impairment as by the failure of schools and communities to accommodate difference (Onoja & Dimas, 2020; Tyodzua, 2021).

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder refers to a mental health condition triggered by distressing experiences, leading to flashbacks, avoidance behaviour and emotional numbness in children. Within an educational setting, the distressing experience need not take the form of a single dramatic event; repeated exposure to rejection, humiliation and academic frustration accumulates in much the same way, producing traumatic recollection, sleeping difficulty, irritability and withdrawal from situations that resemble the original source of distress (World Health Organization, 2020).

Educational exclusion carries a psychological cost that goes beyond lost instructional time. Repeated denial of school admission, placement in segregated classrooms, absence of adapted learning materials and prolonged absenteeism combine to expose children to humiliation, academic frustration and social isolation within the very institution meant to nurture their development. Where such exposure is repeated and unresolved, it can develop into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a condition marked by flashbacks, avoidance behaviour, irritability and emotional numbness (World Health Organization, 2020). Yet in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), a rapidly growing urban locality within the Federal Capital Territory that hosts both formal educational structures and a dense population of

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children with disabilities, the specific pathway between educational exclusion and PTSD among this population has received little sustained empirical attention.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the presence of relatively advanced infrastructure, high literacy levels and formal educational institutions within AMAC, many children with disabilities continue to face denial of admission, unequal classroom treatment, inadequate special education support and absenteeism driven by prior humiliation rather than choice. Existing studies have documented related concerns such as the unavailability of inclusive teaching materials in schools and the marginalising effect of poor infrastructural design, yet these studies stop short of establishing whether and how educational exclusion specifically generates traumatic stress symptoms among children living with disabilities within this locality. Without empirical clarity on this relationship, mental health concerns tied to educational exclusion risk remaining hidden, unaddressed or misunderstood by service providers, school administrators and policymakers responsible for the welfare of these children. It is this gap that the present study addresses.

Research Question

How does educational exclusion generate Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council?

Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to determine how educational exclusion generates Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council.

Research Hypothesis

H_0: Educational exclusion does not significantly generate Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council.

H_1: Educational exclusion significantly generates Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council.

Literature Review

A growing body of empirical work has examined how educational exclusion contributes to traumatic stress among children with disabilities in different settings. Toma (2021) examined how repeated school rejection affected PTSD symptoms among children with chronic illnesses denied admission because of their health needs, and found that a majority of the affected children developed nightmares, social withdrawal and hypervigilance, with parents reporting that their children cried whenever school was mentioned. In a related study, Yilmana (2020) investigated PTSD symptoms among children with mobility impairments excluded from school playgrounds and found that those regularly left out of play exhibited intrusive thoughts, irritability and sleep disturbance, while teachers reported increased fearfulness during group activities.

Bafine (2021) explored the link between lack of learning support and trauma symptoms among children with visual impairments and found that those without braille materials or tailored instruction exhibited persistent sadness, avoidance of school tasks and detachment from peers, with many remaining silent during class discussions. Egba (2020) focused on the trauma effects of repeated punishment arising from misunderstood disability related behaviours among children with dyslexia who were mislabelled as stubborn, and found that a

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majority developed panic attacks, extreme school avoidance and feelings of helplessness once teachers began to associate their reading struggles with indiscipline rather than impairment.

Yaji (2021) examined how being ignored during classroom activities affected PTSD development among children with speech impairments and found that those routinely excluded from oral discussion showed withdrawal, guilt and a fear of being seen, since teachers rarely directed questions toward them. Karami (2020) investigated trauma symptoms among children with cognitive delays excluded from school excursions and group work and found that a majority developed sleep problems, flashbacks and low mood after repeated non inclusion in social and academic activities, with parents reporting visible shame in the children.

Sunu (2021) explored PTSD symptoms among children expelled or suspended from school for behaviours linked to disability and found that a majority experienced fear, shame and recurring distress tied to school memories, with some developing severe avoidance of academic engagement altogether. Birima (2020) assessed the psychological effects of delayed school placement among children with hearing loss and found that those who started school late because of a lack of support showed intense distress in learning settings and fear of interaction, alongside low self confidence noted by their teachers.

Kebba (2021) explored PTSD risk among children repeatedly transferred between schools because of a lack of inclusive facilities and found that those frequently moved showed identity confusion, recurring sadness and fear of abandonment, with parents describing the constant changes as a source of anxiety and withdrawal. Jango (2020) studied how placement in separate classrooms affected trauma symptoms among children with intellectual disabilities and found that those placed apart showed anxiety, helplessness and avoidance of peer interaction, with teachers admitting that the separation served administrative convenience rather than the wellbeing of the learners themselves.

Taken together, these studies converge on a consistent pattern in which denial of admission, segregation, inadequate learning support and forced absence from school combine to produce traumatic stress responses among children with disabilities across diverse settings. What remains comparatively underexamined, and what this article addresses, is how these same indicators operate jointly within an urban Nigerian local government setting such as AMAC, where formal educational infrastructure coexists with persistent gaps in inclusive practice.

Theoretical Framework

This article draws on the Social Model of Disability and the Ecological Systems Theory. The Social Model of Disability, propounded by Oliver (1996), defines disability not as an inherent flaw within an individual but as the outcome of societal barriers that restrict individuals with impairments from full participation in community life. The model assumes that children are not psychologically burdened by their impairments as such, but by exclusionary practices embedded in institutions, cultural norms and physical environments that fail to accommodate their needs (Shakespeare, 2021; Barnes & Mercer, 2020). Applied to educational exclusion, the model would explain traumatic stress among children with disabilities as a product of school admission denial, segregation and inadequate learning support rather than of the disability condition itself, since a school system built to accommodate difference would not generate the same distress.

The Ecological Systems Theory, propounded by Bronfenbrenner (2005), describes human development as shaped by multiple layers of environmental influence, ranging from immediate settings such as the school (microsystem) to broader societal structures such as

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national education policy (macrosystem). The theory assumes that a child's development results from reciprocal interaction between the individual and the surrounding systems, and that no single factor can explain a mental health outcome without considering how school, family and community interact over time (Tudge et al., 2020). Chidiebere (2021) found that children in Abuja Municipal Area Council excluded from inclusive classrooms showed signs of trauma including nightmares and emotional detachment consistent with PTSD, illustrating how disruption within the school microsystem can produce psychological consequences that extend into the home and community. Both theories together provide a fuller explanation of how educational exclusion, operating through denial of admission, segregation, inadequate support and absenteeism, translates into traumatic stress among children living with disabilities in AMAC.

Method

The study adopted a cross sectional survey design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to allow statistical measurement of relationships alongside a deeper exploration of lived experience. The study was conducted in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), located in the eastern part of the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria, an area characterised by rapid urban growth, cultural diversity and a mix of formal and informal child support structures that made it a suitable setting for examining educational exclusion among children with disabilities.

Participants

The population of the study comprised children with disabilities receiving services across 13 agencies in AMAC, together with their caregivers, agency personnel, teachers and administrators of special education institutions.

Sample Technique and Size

A sample size of 396 respondents was determined from a total population of 2,325 children receiving services across the participating agencies, using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula with a chi square value of 3.841 at 1 degree of freedom, a population proportion of 0.50 and a degree of accuracy of 0.05. An additional 20% was added to the calculated sample to allow for missing, wrongly filled or damaged questionnaires, giving a final sample size of 396. Respondents were selected through a stratified sampling technique, with the agencies serving as strata and proportional allocation used to determine the number of respondents drawn from each agency. For the qualitative component, 20 participants, comprising 6 children living with disabilities, 4 caregivers, 4 agency personnel, 3 teachers and 3 administrators, were purposively selected for in depth interviews from among those affiliated with the participating agencies.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and an in depth interview guide, each developed in two versions, one for children living with disabilities and another for caregivers, agency personnel, teachers and administrators. The section of the questionnaire relevant to this article measured educational exclusion and PTSD through five indicators, namely school admission denial, lack of special education support, classroom segregation, absence of inclusive teaching aids and frequent school absenteeism, each linked to a corresponding PTSD symptom. Face and content validity were established through expert review by the research supervisor and academic staff within the Department of Social Work, and reliability was assessed through a pre test involving 20 participants in Bwari Area Council, with a

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Cronbach's alpha coefficient of at least 0.70 considered acceptable. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, with descriptive statistics summarising response patterns and multiple regression analysis testing the relationship between educational exclusion and PTSD. Qualitative data from the in depth interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the AMAC Research Ethics Review Board, and informed consent was secured from all participants, with caregivers or sign language interpreters assisting children unable to respond independently.

Results/Findings

A total of 396 questionnaires were administered to children living with disabilities across selected agencies in Abuja Municipal Area Council. However, 17 questionnaires were either not retrieved, improperly filled or invalid for analysis. Therefore, 379 questionnaires were used for the final analysis, giving a response rate of 95.7%.

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
6–9 years	69	18.2
10–12 years	79	20.9
13–15 years	104	27.4
16–18 years	127	33.5
Gender		
Male	213	56.2
Female	151	39.8
Prefer not to say	15	4.0
Type of disability		
Visual impairment	41	10.8
Hearing impairment	73	19.3
Speech disorder	48	12.7
Physical disability	97	25.6
Intellectual disability	82	21.6
Other disabilities	38	10.0
Agency admitted		
NCPWD	37	9.8
DSNE	169	44.6
SECHILD	41	10.8
DRAC	11	2.9
Dewdrops	14	3.7
Inara Foundation	18	4.7
The Engraced Ones	5	1.3
JONAPWD	33	8.7
Adeyanju Taiwo Center	6	1.6
Nigeria Autism Treatment Network	12	3.2
Special Kids School	22	5.8
Irede Foundation	5	1.3
TY Danjuma Foundation	6	1.6
Form of exclusion experienced		
Physical exclusion	91	24.0
Social isolation	74	19.5

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Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
Educational exclusion	83	21.9
Economic exclusion	57	15.0
Stigmatization	74	19.5
Total	379	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 1 shows that respondents aged 16–18 years formed the largest age group (33.5%), followed by 13–15 years (27.4%), 10–12 years (20.9%) and 6–9 years (18.2%). Male respondents accounted for 56.2% of the sample, female respondents 39.8%, while 4.0% preferred not to disclose their gender. Physical disability was the most common condition reported (25.6%), followed by intellectual disability (21.6%), hearing impairment (19.3%), speech disorder (12.7%), visual impairment (10.8%) and other disabilities (10.0%). The Department of Special Needs Education (DSNE) accounted for the largest share of respondents (44.6%), reflecting the dominance of government linked institutions in service provision within AMAC. Regarding form of exclusion experienced, physical exclusion was most common (24.0%), followed by educational exclusion (21.9%), social isolation and stigmatization (19.5% each) and economic exclusion (15.0%).

Table 2: Educational Exclusion and PTSD among Children Living with Disabilities

Question / Response	Frequency (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
How often does denial of school admission due to disability make you experience recurrent flashbacks about painful events?			
Always	118 (31.1)	1.94	0.81
Often	84 (22.2)		
Sometimes	77 (20.3)		
Rarely	62 (16.4)		
Never	38 (10.0)		
To what extent does lack of special education support services make you feel emotional numbness when thinking about school?			
To a very great extent	123 (32.5)	1.88	0.74
Great extent	81 (21.4)		
Moderate extent	76 (20.1)		
Small extent	61 (16.1)		
No extent	38 (10.0)		
How frequently does segregation in separate classrooms make you experience irritability during lessons?			
Very frequently	119 (31.4)	1.92	0.79
Frequently	87 (23.0)		
Occasionally	71 (18.7)		
Rarely	64 (16.9)		
Never	38 (10.0)		
How much does absence of inclusive teaching aids make you have difficulty sleeping?			
Very much	115 (30.3)	2.01	0.84
Much	89 (23.5)		
Somewhat	74 (19.5)		
A little	63 (16.6)		
Not at all	38 (10.0)		
How often does frequent school absenteeism make you show avoidance of situations that trigger distress?			

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Always	127 (33.5)	1.80	0.70
Often	82 (21.6)		
Sometimes	71 (18.7)		
Rarely	61 (16.1)		
Never	38 (10.0)		

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 2 examined educational exclusion and PTSD among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council. The findings indicated that 31.1% of the respondents stated that denial of school admission due to disability always made them experience recurrent flashbacks about painful events, whereas 10.0% stated that they never experienced such flashbacks. The mean score of 1.94 with a standard deviation of 0.81 suggests that exclusion from school admission had serious emotional effects on many respondents. The table also revealed that 32.5% of the respondents stated that lack of special education support services made them feel emotional numbness when thinking about school to a very great extent, while 10.0% indicated that it had no influence on them, with a mean value of 1.88 and a standard deviation of 0.74. On segregation in separate classrooms, 31.4% of the respondents stated that such segregation very frequently made them experience irritability during lessons, while 10.0% stated that they never experienced irritability from such separation, with a mean score of 1.92 and a standard deviation of 0.79. The findings further showed that 30.3% of the respondents stated that absence of inclusive teaching aids affected their sleeping pattern very much, whereas 10.0% stated not at all, with a mean score of 2.01 and a standard deviation of 0.84. The result equally showed that 33.5% of the respondents stated that frequent school absenteeism always made them avoid situations that trigger distress, while 10.0% indicated that they never avoided such situations, with a mean score of 1.80 and a standard deviation of 0.70.

Test of Hypothesis

H_0: Educational exclusion does not significantly generate Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council.

Table 3: Model Summary for Educational Exclusion and PTSD

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.854	0.729	0.724	0.382

Table 4: ANOVA[a] for Educational Exclusion and PTSD

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	184.611	5	36.922	159.707	0.000[b]
Residual	86.236	373	0.231		
Total	270.847	378			

Table 5: Summary Result of Multiple Regression Analysis (Coefficients[a]) for Educational Exclusion and PTSD

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	-0.621	0.151		-4.113	0.004
School Admission Denial	0.408	0.033	0.468	12.364	0.001
Lack of Special Education Support	0.339	0.028	0.389	12.107	0.001

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Classroom Segregation	0.296	0.030	0.327	9.867	0.003
Absence of Inclusive Teaching Aids	0.371	0.031	0.421	11.968	0.001
Frequent School Absenteeism	0.447	0.035	0.591	12.771	0.001

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to test whether educational exclusion significantly generated Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council. The model summary showed an R value of 0.854, indicating a strong relationship between educational exclusion variables and PTSD among the respondents. The R square value of 0.729 implies that 72.9% of the variation in PTSD among children living with disabilities was explained by school admission denial, lack of special education support, classroom segregation, absence of inclusive teaching aids and frequent school absenteeism. The adjusted R square value of 0.724 suggests that the regression model maintained substantial predictive strength after adjustment, while the standard error of estimate of 0.382 indicates relatively low variation around the regression line.

The ANOVA result revealed an F value of 159.707 with a significance value of 0.000, which was below the 0.05 level of significance adopted for the study. This indicates that the regression model was statistically significant in explaining the relationship between educational exclusion and PTSD among children living with disabilities. The implication is that educational exclusion contributed significantly to traumatic stress conditions among respondents within the study area.

The coefficient analysis further showed that school admission denial had a positive and significant influence on PTSD with $\beta = 0.468$, $t = 12.364$, $p = 0.001$. This suggests that repeated rejection from educational institutions increased emotional pain and traumatic recollection among children living with disabilities. Lack of special education support also showed a significant positive relationship with PTSD with $\beta = 0.389$, $t = 12.107$, $p = 0.001$, indicating that absence of specialised educational assistance contributed to emotional withdrawal and psychological stress among respondents.

The findings equally revealed that classroom segregation significantly influenced PTSD with $\beta = 0.327$, $t = 9.867$, $p = 0.003$. This implies that separation from other learners increased feelings of rejection, emotional discomfort and psychological distress among children living with disabilities. Absence of inclusive teaching aids recorded a positive and significant effect with $\beta = 0.421$, $t = 11.968$, $p = 0.001$, suggesting that inadequate learning support materials increased anxiety and emotional strain among respondents. Frequent school absenteeism recorded the strongest positive relationship with PTSD with $\beta = 0.591$, $t = 12.771$, $p = 0.001$, indicating that repeated absence from school strengthened avoidance behaviour and traumatic stress among children living with disabilities. Based on the significance value of 0.000 which was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, educational exclusion significantly generated Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council.

To balance the quantitative findings generated from the questionnaire, qualitative responses were obtained through in depth interviews with counsellors, teachers, rehabilitation personnel, caregivers, and social welfare officers working closely with children living with disabilities within Abuja Municipal Area Council.

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One of the respondents explained that denial of school admission affects many children emotionally because some children repeatedly experience rejection from schools simply because of their disability condition. The participant stated that some children become emotionally disturbed after hearing school authorities reject them publicly in the presence of parents or caregivers. According to the respondent, such experiences remain in the minds of many children for long periods because they interpret rejection as proof that they are unwanted within society. The participant also observed that some children become fearful whenever discussions about school admission arise because previous experiences of rejection affected their emotional confidence. The respondent stressed that repeated educational rejection contributes substantially to emotional trauma and psychological distress among children living with disabilities. **(IDI21, Female, Guidance Counsellor, 43 years, 2025).**

The response suggests that denial of school admission contributes strongly to emotional trauma among children living with disabilities. The participant linked repeated rejection from educational institutions with fear, emotional pain, and traumatic recollection among affected children. The explanation also indicates that public humiliation during admission processes weakens emotional confidence and increases psychological distress. Through this statement, the respondent demonstrated that educational exclusion affects emotional wellbeing through repeated experiences of rejection and discrimination. The response aligns with the study objective because it shows that denial of school admission contributes substantially to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among children living with disabilities within Abuja Municipal Area Council.

Another participant stated that lack of special education support affects the emotional condition of many children living with disabilities because they struggle academically without receiving proper assistance within school environments. The respondent explained that some children gradually lose emotional interest in school whenever they cannot understand classroom instruction or participate effectively in learning activities. According to the participant, children who repeatedly fail classroom tasks because of inadequate support often become emotionally withdrawn and anxious whenever lessons begin. The respondent also observed that some children stop attending school regularly after experiencing frustration linked to poor educational assistance. The participant stressed that absence of specialised educational support contributes significantly to emotional stress among children living with disabilities. **(IDI22, Male, Special Education Teacher, 45 years, 2025).**

The participant associated lack of special education support with emotional withdrawal and psychological stress among children living with disabilities. The statement suggests that inability to participate effectively in classroom activities weakens emotional attachment toward education among affected children. The explanation also indicates that repeated academic frustration contributes to fear and emotional instability within school environments. Through this response, the participant reinforced the argument that educational exclusion influences traumatic stress through inadequate support systems and repeated learning difficulties. The statement equally supports the study objective because it demonstrates that absence of special education support contributes substantially to PTSD related symptoms among children living with disabilities.

Another respondent explained that segregation into separate classrooms affects children emotionally because many of them interpret such separation as evidence that they are different from other learners within the school environment. The participant stated that some children become irritated during lessons whenever they notice unequal treatment compared to pupils without disabilities. According to the respondent, classroom separation weakens social

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interaction and creates emotional discomfort because affected children feel disconnected from normal school participation. The participant also observed that some children avoid participating in school discussions after repeated experiences of segregation within educational activities. The respondent stressed that educational separation contributes strongly to emotional tension and withdrawal among children living with disabilities. **(IDI23, Female, Social Worker, 39 years, 2025).**

The response demonstrates that classroom segregation contributes substantially to emotional discomfort and traumatic stress among children living with disabilities. The participant linked unequal classroom treatment with irritability, withdrawal, and emotional tension among affected children. The explanation also indicates that separation from other learners weakens social belonging and affects confidence during educational participation. Through this statement, the respondent showed that educational exclusion influences PTSD symptoms through repeated experiences of social and academic isolation. The response therefore aligns with the study objective by demonstrating that classroom segregation contributes directly to emotional distress among children living with disabilities.

Another participant stated that absence of inclusive teaching aids affects many children emotionally because they struggle to follow lessons without appropriate learning materials and classroom support. The respondent explained that some children become anxious whenever teachers begin lessons because they already expect difficulty understanding classroom instruction. According to the participant, repeated academic frustration affects sleeping patterns among some children because they constantly worry about school performance and classroom embarrassment. The respondent also observed that emotional distress becomes more visible among children attending schools where inclusive educational resources are inadequate. The participant stressed that lack of inclusive teaching aids contributes significantly to psychological discomfort among children living with disabilities. **(IDI24, Male, Rehabilitation Officer, 50 years, 2025).**

The participant connected absence of inclusive teaching aids with emotional anxiety and psychological stress among children living with disabilities. The statement suggests that inability to access supportive learning materials weakens classroom confidence and increases emotional discomfort among affected children. The explanation also indicates that repeated academic frustration affects emotional stability and sleeping behaviour. Through this response, the participant reinforced the argument that educational exclusion influences traumatic stress through unequal learning opportunities and restricted classroom support. The statement equally supports the study objective because it demonstrates that absence of inclusive teaching aids contributes substantially to PTSD related symptoms among children living with disabilities.

Another respondent explained that frequent school absenteeism affects emotional wellbeing among children living with disabilities because many of them gradually develop fear toward school environments after repeated negative experiences. The participant stated that some children avoid returning to school whenever they experience ridicule, rejection, or academic frustration during previous attendance. According to the respondent, repeated absence weakens social interaction and increases emotional isolation among affected children because they lose connection with classmates and educational activities. The participant also observed that some children become emotionally restless whenever conversations about school attendance arise within their homes. The respondent stressed that prolonged absenteeism contributes strongly to avoidance behaviour and emotional distress among children living with disabilities. **(IDI25, Female, Child Welfare Officer, 42 years, 2025).**

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The response indicates that frequent school absenteeism contributes substantially to emotional withdrawal and avoidance behaviour among children living with disabilities. The participant linked repeated negative school experiences with fear, emotional isolation and psychological discomfort among affected children. The explanation also suggests that absence from school weakens social participation and increases emotional instability within educational environments. Through this statement, the respondent demonstrated that educational exclusion affects PTSD symptoms through repeated exposure to rejection, frustration, and emotional stress. The response therefore supports the study objective by showing that educational exclusion significantly generated Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council.

In general, the interview responses revealed that educational exclusion contributed significantly to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among children living with disabilities within Abuja Municipal Area Council. The participants repeatedly associated denial of school admission, lack of special education support, classroom segregation, absence of inclusive teaching aids and frequent school absenteeism with emotional distress, fear, withdrawal, irritability, and avoidance behaviour among affected children. The discussions also showed that repeated rejection and unequal educational participation weaken emotional confidence and increase psychological discomfort among children living with disabilities. Many respondents stressed that traumatic stress among affected children develops gradually through accumulated experiences of exclusion, academic frustration and emotional humiliation within educational environments.

Discussions

The study found that denial of school admission significantly generated PTSD among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council, reflected mainly through recurrent flashbacks about painful events. This suggests that being turned away from school is not experienced as a single administrative setback but registers as a rejection severe enough to embed itself in memory and resurface long after the event itself. This finding is in line with Toma (2021), who found that children repeatedly denied school admission because of their health needs developed nightmares, social withdrawal and hypervigilance.

The study also found that lack of special education support significantly contributed to PTSD among the respondents, reflected mainly through emotional numbness whenever school came to mind. This suggests that when a child's specific learning needs go consistently unmet, the resulting disengagement runs deeper than ordinary academic frustration, dulling the child's emotional connection to school altogether. This finding is in line with Bafine (2021), who found that children without braille materials or tailored instruction showed persistent sadness, avoidance of school tasks and detachment from their peers.

The study found that classroom segregation significantly influenced PTSD among children living with disabilities, expressed mainly through irritability during lessons. This suggests that physically separating a child from their classmates does not just limit academic interaction but communicates a message of unworthiness that the child carries into every subsequent lesson. This finding is in line with Jango (2020), who found that children placed in separate classrooms showed anxiety, helplessness and avoidance of peer interaction. Similarly, it was revealed in the study by Yilmana (2020) that children regularly excluded from shared activities exhibited irritability and sleep disturbance.

The study equally found that the absence of inclusive teaching aids significantly influenced PTSD among the respondents, reflected mainly through disrupted sleeping patterns. This

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suggests that the strain of trying to follow lessons without appropriate materials does not stay confined to the classroom but follows the child home, unsettling even their rest. This finding is in line with Karami (2020), who found that children repeatedly left out of academic activities developed sleep problems, flashbacks and low mood.

The study found that frequent school absenteeism contributed most strongly to PTSD among children living with disabilities in the study area, expressed mainly through avoidance of situations that trigger distress. This suggests that among the different forms of educational exclusion examined, staying away from school altogether does the most psychological damage, since avoidance offers short term relief but reinforces the very fear it is meant to escape. This finding is in line with Sunu (2021), who found that children suspended or expelled from school experienced fear, shame and recurring distress linked to school memories, with some developing severe avoidance of academic engagement altogether.

The findings agree with the assumptions of the Social Model of Disability, which argues that institutional barriers and exclusionary educational systems intensify disability related difficulties within society rather than the impairment itself doing so. The present findings support this position because traumatic stress among children living with disabilities was associated strongly with unequal educational participation, inaccessible learning support and discriminatory school practices rather than with the disability condition itself. The findings also agree with the Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that child development is influenced by interaction within educational institutions, peer environments, family structures and community systems. Since school environments and classroom participation affected emotional wellbeing negatively among the respondents, the findings validate the assumption that educational interaction influences psychological development among children living with disabilities.

Conclusion

This study has shown that educational exclusion, expressed through school admission denial, lack of special education support, classroom segregation, absence of inclusive teaching aids and frequent school absenteeism, significantly generated Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among children living with disabilities in Abuja Municipal Area Council. Findings showed that denial of school admission, lack of inclusive teaching materials, classroom segregation, punishment linked to disability related difficulties and exclusion from academic participation contributed to emotional trauma among affected children. Many children reportedly developed fear of school environments, emotional withdrawal, recurring distress, nightmares, flashbacks and social avoidance after repeated educational rejection. Teachers and caregivers equally explained that some children became emotionally detached due to humiliation experienced within learning environments. The study therefore establishes that hostile educational experiences created long term emotional distress among children living with disabilities, and that improving the mental health of children living with disabilities in AMAC requires deliberate attention to how educational institutions admit, support, place and retain these children, rather than treating educational access and mental health as separate concerns.

Recommendation

Based on the finding that frequent school absenteeism and school admission denial carried the greatest weight in explaining Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, the study recommends that school administrators in Abuja Municipal Area Council end outright denial of admission on the basis of disability and adopt structured assessment with reasonable accommodation instead. Schools should also set up follow up procedures with counselling services to identify

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children showing withdrawal, irritability or repeated absenteeism before distress becomes entrenched. Government and school authorities should expand trained special education personnel and specialised support services within mainstream schools rather than in a few designated centres, while educational institutions provide accessible learning materials and disability sensitive teaching aids and place children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms alongside their peers.

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