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AN ASSESSMENT OF GENDER-BASED CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS OF DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDE AND IRREGULAR LANGUAGE IN HEARING-IMPAIRED SCHOOL- AGED CHILDREN IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to assess gender-based cultural considerations of discriminatory attitude and irregular language in hearing-impaired school-aged children in Rivers State, Nigeria. The design was chosen to examine the nature and conditions of these phenomena as they exist, allowing direct data collection from the target population without manipulation of variables. The population comprised 235 hearing-impaired students from Shalom International School, Port Harcourt, and the Special School for Handicapped Children, Borokiri, spanning Primary 1–6, Junior Secondary School 1–3, and Senior Secondary School 1–3. Due to the small population size, a census approach was employed to ensure maximum participation and statistical reliability. Out of 235 distributed questionnaires, 213 were duly completed and analyzed. Data were collected using a self-developed instrument, the “Assessment of Gender-Based Cultural Considerations of Discriminatory Attitude and Irregular Language in Hearing-Impaired School-Aged Children Questionnaire (AGBCCDAILHISACQ),” which comprised demographic items and constructs assessing discriminatory attitude and irregular language, rated on a modified four-point Likert scale. Validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability, determined via the test–retest method, yielded a coefficient of .876, indicating high consistency. The researcher, supported by five assistants, administered the questionnaire directly, providing clarifications where necessary. Data analysis employed means, standard deviations, and independent samples t-tests at the 0.05 significance level. The findings provided empirical evidences into the gender-based cultural factors that influence discriminatory attitudes and language patterns among hearing-impaired school-aged children in the study area. The study recommends that schools should implement inclusive communication strategies, including sign language training and speech support, to reduce discriminatory attitudes and promote equal educational opportunities for hearing-impaired children regardless of gender.

Keywords: Assessment, Gender-Based, Cultural Considerations, Discriminatory Attitude, Irregular Language, Hearing-Impaired, School-Aged Children, Rivers State, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Hearing impairment in childhood is not only a medical condition but also a social and cultural phenomenon that interacts with local beliefs, gender norms, and educational practices to shape children's developmental trajectories. In Rivers State, Nigeria, cultural factors such as stigma, discriminatory attitudes, and irregular or inconsistent language exposure play especially important roles in determining educational access, social inclusion, and language outcomes for school-aged children with hearing loss. This essay examines how discriminatory attitudes and irregular language is conceptualised here as inconsistent exposure to rich, structured language input across home and school settings operated differently by gender, and the implications for policy and practice.

Discriminatory attitudes toward persons with disabilities are widely documented as a barrier to inclusion and development. Stigma may be overt (exclusion, denial of opportunities) or subtle (lowered expectations, differential socialisation), and both forms have measurable effects on schooling and psychosocial well-being (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). In many Nigerian communities, disability can be viewed through cultural lenses that attribute impairment to supernatural causes or family shame; such perspectives can foster exclusionary behaviours that are gendered. For example, female children with hearing impairment are more likely to experience early withdrawal from formal schooling because families prioritise male children education or fear that an impaired daughter will be unsuitable for marriage (Okiridu, 2019). Conversely, male children with hearing impairment may face pressure to “perform masculinity” in contexts that stigmatise disability, leading to social isolation or aggressive coping strategies. Thus, discriminatory attitudes interact with gender norms to produce distinct patterns of disadvantage for male and female (Hallahan et al., 2015).

Irregular language exposure is another cultural-mediated factor that disproportionately affects children with hearing loss. Hearing-impaired children require consistent access to language input, whether through amplified auditory input, sign language, or multimodal communication to develop age-appropriate language skills (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA], 2015). In Rivers State, inconsistent provision of language support may arise from several cultural and systemic sources: limited parental knowledge about communication options, inconsistent use of sign language in the home due to stigma, and intermittent or inadequate school support (Ubani, 2022). When families alternate between withholding communication (due to shame) and sporadic attempts at instruction, children receive fragmented language input that undermines vocabulary growth, syntax, and narrative skills. Importantly, the gendered division of caregiving and social roles may shape language input, while female children may be confined to domestic spaces where conversational interaction is limited, whereas male children may have more opportunities for peer play that supports language development or the reverse may occur where male children are expected to be independent and receive less guided linguistic interaction (Hallahan et al., 2015; ASHA, 2015).

Empirical studies in similar low- and middle-income contexts show that discriminatory attitudes correlate with delayed school enrolment, lower teacher expectations, and reduced participation in classroom activities all of which magnify the consequences of irregular language exposure (WHO, 2018). In Nigeria specifically, community attitudes documented in regional reports point to stigma, low expectations, and social exclusion as persistent problems that plausibly increase risk for both social skill deficits and depressive symptoms among hearing-impaired children (Okiridu, 2019; Ubani, 2022). When educators and peers hold stigmatizing

beliefs, teachers may unconsciously provide less rich linguistic interaction, fewer opportunities for oral practice, and limited curricular differentiation, thereby reinforcing language deficits. Gender compounds this dynamic: teachers may expect less academic success from female children with disabilities or channel male children into vocational tasks that deprive them of literacy-focused interaction.

The developmental consequences are serious. Language deficits in childhood are tightly linked to poorer academic achievement, limited social competence, and higher rates of mental health problems (ASHA, 2015; Hallahan et al., 2015). For hearing-impaired children in Rivers State, the combination of gendered discriminatory attitudes and irregular language exposure risks creating entrenched educational gaps. Female children who are discouraged from speaking out or from participating in class may develop limited expressive language; male children who face social isolation may have restricted opportunities to practise conversational repair and pragmatic skills. Over time these deficits translate into lower literacy, reduced employment prospects, and diminished civic participation.

Addressing these intertwined problems requires culturally informed, gender-sensitive interventions at multiple levels. First, community education campaigns should target beliefs that stigmatise hearing impairment and emphasise the rights and potentials of all children regardless of gender. Campaigns that feature local role models and use local languages are more likely to change attitudes (WHO, 2018). Second, family-centred communication training can reduce irregular language exposure by equipping caregivers with strategies for consistent, supportive interaction like basic sign language, visual supports, and routines that embed language learning in daily activities (ASHA, 2015). Because gendered caregiving roles influence who provides language input, training must actively include mothers and fathers as well as extended family members.

In schools, teacher professional development is essential. Teachers should be trained to scaffold language development, use inclusive pedagogy, and avoid gendered assumptions about ability. Practical classroom strategies include cooperative learning, structured peer interaction, and use of multimodal materials that make language accessible to hearing-impaired learners. Where possible, placement of specialist resource teachers or sign-language interpreters helps ensure consistent language input across the school day (Hallahan et al., 2015). Policy actions like enforcing inclusive education laws, funding early intervention, and mandating gender-sensitive disability screening can provide the structural supports that schools and families need.

Finally, monitoring and research specific to Rivers State are necessary to tailor interventions effectively. Local studies should disaggregate data by gender to detect whether discriminatory attitudes and irregular language exposure indeed vary between male and female children, and to identify subgroups at highest risk. Qualitative inquiry into family narratives and teacher beliefs will illuminate the cultural mechanisms sustaining stigma, while intervention trials can evaluate the effectiveness of family training, teacher workshops, and community campaigns (Okiridu, 2019; Ubani, 2022).

Discriminatory attitudes and irregular language exposure are culturally mediated drivers of disadvantage for hearing-impaired school-aged children in Rivers State, and these drivers operate through gendered social structures. Effective responses must therefore be culturally grounded, gender-responsive, and multisectoral that combines community education, family communication support, teacher training, and policy backing. Only by addressing culture and gender together can Rivers State begin to close the gaps that limit the language, learning, and life chances of children with hearing impairment.

Statement of the Problem

Hearing-impaired school-aged children in Rivers State encounter multiple cultural and social barriers that significantly influence their developmental and educational outcomes. Among the most critical of these cultural considerations are discriminatory attitudes and irregular language exposure, both of which shape how children with hearing impairment are perceived, supported, and integrated within their families, schools, and communities. Despite ongoing advocacy for inclusive education in Nigeria, many communities still hold stigmatizing beliefs that associate disability with shame, misfortune, or supernatural causes. Such discriminatory attitudes often manifest in differential treatment of children with hearing impairment, restricting their participation in social interactions, school activities, and peer relationships. These challenges may be compounded by gender norms, as male and female children often experience stigma and exclusion differently, resulting in unequal access to communication opportunities and support services.

Additionally, irregular language exposure remains a pervasive issue for hearing-impaired children in the region. Many families lack the knowledge or resources to provide consistent communication support, leading to fragmented language input at home and in school. This irregularity disrupts linguistic development, affects academic achievement, and limits social competence. However, little empirical research has examined how these cultural barriers vary across gender or how they jointly contribute to developmental disparities among hearing-impaired children in Rivers State.

Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the insufficient understanding of the gender-based cultural challenges, specifically discriminatory attitudes and irregular language that hinder the social, linguistic, and educational development of hearing-impaired school-aged children in Rivers State, Nigeria. This knowledge gap necessitates systematic investigation to inform effective, culturally responsive, and gender-sensitive interventions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess of gender-based cultural considerations of discriminatory attitude and irregular language in hearing-impaired school-aged children in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically the objectives of the study are to:

- Determent the extent to which discriminatory attitude is a significant cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender.
- Assess the extent to which irregular language is a significant cultural considerations of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- To what extent is discriminatory attitude a cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender?

- To what extent is irregular language a cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses further guided the study:

- Discriminatory attitude is not a significant cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender.
- Irregular language is not a significant cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Intersectionality was first articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. It is a theoretical framework that examined how multiple social identities interact to create unique experiences of oppression, privilege, and discrimination. Crenshaw developed the concept to illustrate how Black women in the United States faced forms of discrimination that could not be understood solely through the lenses of gender or race; instead, their experiences emerged from the intersection of both identities. Intersectionality therefore rejects single-axis analyses of inequality and argues that identity categories such as gender, ethnicity, disability, class, and age are interdependent systems that mutually shape lived realities (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2000).

Intersectionality highlighted the multiplicity of oppression. Individuals do not experience discrimination in isolated compartments; rather, forms of marginalisation overlap and reinforce one another. For example, a hearing-impaired female child in a culturally conservative context may face discrimination based on gender expectations, disability-related stigma, and cultural norms about communication and social roles. This combined pattern of disadvantage is different from, and often more intense than, the experiences of male children with the same disability or female children without disabilities. Thus, intersectionality provides a nuanced lens for exploring how inequalities become layered within socio-cultural systems (Hankivsky, 2012).

Crenshaw (1989) identified three dimensions of intersectionality: structural, political, and representational. Structural intersectionality focuses on how institutional arrangements and socio-economic hierarchies compound vulnerability. In the context of childhood disability, limited access to inclusive schooling, gendered household expectations, and socio-economic barriers may intersect to shape outcomes for hearing-impaired female children. Political intersectionality examines how advocacy frameworks and policies often fail to address the complexities of individuals who straddle multiple marginalised identities. For example, disability legislation may not address gender-specific risks, while gender policies may overlook the needs of female children with disabilities (Walby et al., 2012). Representational intersectionality critiques cultural narratives, stereotypes, and communication practices that marginalise individuals at the intersection of multiple identities. Irregular or infantilising language directed at hearing-impaired children can reinforce cultural narratives that frame them as dependent or incapable, with female children often receiving more restrictive social expectations.

Intersectionality has become a foundational framework across disciplines, including education, public health, social work, and disability studies. In educational research, it offers a tool for examining disparities in access, participation, learning outcomes, and teacher attitudes

(Gillborn, 2015). It shifts the focus away from treating children with disabilities as a homogenous group and instead recognises the differentiated experiences of learners based on gender, socio-cultural environment, and the nature of disability. Particularly in African contexts, intersectionality has been used to highlight how cultural norms, patriarchal structures, and poverty intersect with disability to shape children's opportunities (Erevelles & Minear, 2010).

For studies involving hearing-impaired school-aged children, intersectionality provides a meaningful framework for analysing gender-based cultural considerations. Discriminatory attitudes such as beliefs that female children with disabilities should be overly protected, excluded from leadership roles, or limited in social participation are embedded within cultural expectations about gender and disability. Similarly, patterns of irregular language use, such as simplified, directive, or patronising speech, can reflect deeper cultural narratives about children with disabilities as dependent or less capable communicators. Intersectionality helps the researcher understand how gender shapes these communicative encounters and how disability amplifies the negative consequences.

A key strength of intersectionality is its emphasis on context. Rivers State, like many Nigerian societies, is shaped by cultural norms concerning gender roles, family responsibilities, respect hierarchies, and communication behaviour. These norms intersect with widespread misconceptions about hearing impairment and disability-related stigma, creating differentiated experiences for male and female children. Thus, the intersectional framework enables a culturally grounded analysis of discriminatory behaviour, school practices, and communicative patterns.

Overall, intersectionality enriches research by promoting a multidimensional understanding of inequality. It highlights how systems of oppression reinforce one another and foregrounds the voices of those positioned at complex social intersections. For researchers exploring gender-based cultural considerations among hearing-impaired school-aged children, intersectionality provides a robust lens through which to interpret differentiated experiences, inform inclusive policies, and advance more equitable educational practices.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Hearing Impairment

Hearing-impaired research in Nigeria has expanded over the past two decades but remains uneven in scope and geographic coverage. Early epidemiological work highlighted substantial prevalence of childhood and school-age hearing loss and identified middle ear disease (particularly otitis media) as a leading contributor to avoidable hearing impairment (Olusanya, 2000). Subsequent facility- and community-based studies have reinforced that many children and adults are diagnosed late often only after delayed speech development or school difficulties become apparent because routine newborn and early-childhood hearing screening programs are largely absent or limited to pilot projects. These findings point to persistent gaps in early detection and primary-ear care that increase the burden of preventable hearing loss in Nigeria.

Regional studies from tertiary and community settings have documented a mix of biomedical and social determinants. Clinical and hospital-based research in Nigeria shows that infections, impacted earwax, and untreated otitis media remain frequent proximate causes of hearing impairment, while socio-economic barriers, low caretaker awareness, and limited access to audiology services delay care-seeking (Labaeka et al., 2018; Lasisi, 2010). At the population

level, broader sub-Saharan reviews similarly report high prevalence of hearing impairment linked to preventable infections and lack of rehabilitation services, underscoring the need for integrated public-health responses (Desalew et al., 2020). These studies collectively argue that prevention (vaccination, infection control), community ear-care, and scalable screening would likely have large public-health impact in Nigeria.

Education and rehabilitation research are some important studies on Nigeria-focused work that examined scholastic outcomes, social adjustment, and service provision for children with hearing impairment. Recent Nigerian investigation (e.g., Ubani et al., 2022) addressed school performance, classroom inclusion, and the preparedness of teachers and counselors to support deaf and hard-of-hearing learners. These studies often find that special schools and integrated settings face shortages of trained teachers, limited use of assistive technologies, and inadequate psychosocial support, which together constrain educational attainment and social participation for pupils with hearing loss. Research on rehabilitation shows promising local initiatives but highlights inconsistent availability of hearing aids, speech-language therapy, and community-based rehabilitation programs.

Methodological limitations are common across the literature because many studies are cross-sectional, facility-based, or limited to single states or urban centers (e.g., Port Harcourt, Lagos, Abuja), which restricts national generalizability. However, a growing body of systematic reviews and regional syntheses points to the same core message of infections and late detection dominate the etiologic landscape in West Africa, while device uptake and follow-up care remain suboptimal (Wahome, 2023). Nonetheless, Nigerian research on hearing impairment has produced valuable local evidence about prevalence, causes, and educational challenges, but gaps remain in nationwide surveillance, early detection programs, and longitudinal outcome data, which this study aim to contribute to the limited literature.

Discriminatory Attitude as a Cultural Consideration of School-Aged Hearing-Impaired Children Based on Gender

Discriminatory attitudes toward hearing-impaired children in Nigeria are shaped by deep-rooted cultural beliefs, social expectations, and gender norms that intersect to create unequal experiences for male and female children with hearing loss. Cultural ideologies about disability often influence how society perceives children with hearing impairment, and these perceptions can manifest in various forms of discrimination, ranging from stigmatization and exclusion to reduced access to educational and social opportunities. When these cultural attitudes combine with gendered expectations in the Nigerian context, female children with hearing impairment often face double disadvantages, while male children encounter distinct forms of bias linked to societal expectations of male competence, independence, and productivity (Abang, 2005; Oliver, 2013).

In many Nigerian communities, hearing impairment is still associated with myths, misconceptions, and spiritual or supernatural explanations. These beliefs reinforce stigma, leading to discriminatory attitudes that affect how families, peers, teachers, and community members interact with hearing-impaired children. For example, some communities perceive disability as a sign of ancestral punishment or misfortune, resulting in emotional distancing, overprotection, or reduced investment in the child's education (Eleweke & Ebenso, 2016). When gender is layered onto these beliefs, cultural prioritization of male children often means that male children with hearing impairments may still receive some support aligned with expectations that

they will contribute economically in adulthood. Conversely, female children with the same impairment may be perceived as less valuable, less marriageable, or less deserving of educational investment, intensifying discriminatory attitudes (Ekeh & Adeniyi, 2020).

Within school settings, discriminatory attitudes manifest through peer rejection, verbal ridicule, marginalization during class activities, and teachers' low expectations of hearing-impaired pupils (Okombo, 2019). These experiences can be more pronounced for female children who are already navigating cultural norms that undervalue female education in some Nigerian cultures. Male with hearing impairment may experience discrimination linked to perceived incompetence or weakness relative to cultural expectations of masculinity, while female children may face additional gender-based stereotypes that limit their participation in leadership activities, science-related subjects, and school leadership roles (UNESCO, 2018). These patterns illustrate how cultural constructions of gender intersect with disability to influence the degree and nature of discrimination faced by male and female children with hearing impairment.

According to Eide and Ingstad (2017), discriminatory attitudes also influence access to resources and support services. Studies indicate that while male children with disabilities are more likely to be enrolled in school, female children with disabilities like hearing impairment are more likely to experience delayed school enrollment, early school dropout, and lack of access to assistive technologies. Cultural norms that prioritize male children education result in gendered inequalities that systematically disadvantage hearing-impaired female children. To Okiridu and Ubani (2022), households with limited financial resources, hearing aids, speech therapy, audiological evaluations, and transportation to specialized schools are more likely to be allocated to male children, reinforcing structural discrimination.

Moreover, cultural norms surrounding communication further reinforce discriminatory experiences. In many Nigerian families, discussions about disability are often avoided, and children especially female children may not be encouraged to express themselves. Hearing-impaired female children face compounded communication barrier, like their hearing loss limits auditory access, and gendered cultural expectations limit self-expression. This combination contributes to increased social isolation, poor psychological adjustment, and heightened vulnerability to peer victimization (Krech, 2019).

Evidence from Okiridu and Ubani (2022) study revealed that discriminatory attitudes toward hearing-impaired school-aged children in Nigeria are deeply rooted in cultural perceptions of disability and gender roles. Male and female children face discrimination differently, but female children often encounter more severe consequences due to gender biases that undermine their access to education, social inclusion, and rehabilitative support. Addressing these issues requires culturally responsive educational interventions, gender-sensitive policies, and community awareness programs that challenge discriminatory norms and promote inclusive attitudes toward all children with hearing impairment.

Irregular Language as a Cultural Consideration of School-Aged Hearing-Impaired Children Based on Gender

Irregular language patterns among school-aged hearing-impaired children in Nigeria are shaped by complex interactions between cultural norms, communication practices, and gender expectations. Hearing impairment affects the natural acquisition of spoken language because language learning typically relies on auditory exposure, interaction, and reinforcement. However,

cultural attitudes toward disability and gender roles significantly influence how children with hearing loss acquire and use language, contributing to variations and irregularities in expressive and receptive communication skills (Eleweke & Ebenso, 2016; Meadow-Orlans et al., 2004).

In several Nigerian communities, communication with children who have hearing impairment is often limited by cultural misunderstanding of the disability. Families may rely heavily on oral communication but lack the skills or knowledge to adapt communication strategies such as lip-reading, sign language, or visual cues. As a result, hearing-impaired children often develop irregular language patterns such as delayed speech, limited vocabulary, syntactic errors, and unconventional expressive forms (Kluwin & Moores, 2015). These irregularities are not solely a result of auditory deprivation; they are intensified by cultural communication norms that may discourage open, adaptive, and inclusive communication practices.

Gender further shapes how irregular language develops and is perceived in hearing-impaired children. Studies indicate that female children with disabilities often receive less communication stimulation than male children due to traditional gender socialization patterns that encourage male children to be more expressive and interactive, while female children are often conditioned toward passive communication roles (Eide & Ingstad, 2017). In many patriarchal cultures across Nigeria, male children are culturally encouraged to speak confidently and assertively, while female children may be expected to adopt submissive, minimally expressive communication styles. For hearing-impaired female children, this expectation compounds their limited auditory access, leading to greater vulnerability to irregular or underdeveloped language structures (Ajuwon, 2008).

In schools, irregular language patterns can manifest in children's difficulty with grammar, sentence structure, comprehension, and classroom discourse. Teachers' attitudes play a crucial role. Research in Nigerian educational contexts has shown that teachers often have limited training in sign language, speech support strategies, or visual-verbal instructional methods (Okiridu & Ubani, 2022). This communication gap frequently leads to reduced feedback, limited language modeling, and decreased interaction for hearing-impaired learners. For male children, irregular language may be interpreted as behavioral or cognitive challenges because cultural norms expect male children to speak clearly and assertively. For female children, teachers may misinterpret irregular language as shyness or compliance, resulting in less targeted language intervention and lower expectations for academic participation (UNESCO, 2018). These gendered interpretations deepen disparities in language development outcomes.

Cultural beliefs surrounding disability also influence how families prioritize communication development. In households that perceive disability through spiritual or fatalistic lenses, parents may invest less effort in structured communication training or literacy activities, believing that the child's abilities are inherently limited (Abang, 2005). When economic resources are scarce, cultural norms that favor male children often lead families to invest more in male children's language and educational development than female children. Consequently, Ekeh and Adeniyi (2020) noted that male children with hearing impairment may receive more communication support in the form of tutoring, speech therapy (where available), or language-rich interactions, while female children are overlooked or excluded from such opportunities.

Furthermore, the limited visibility of female role models who use sign language or who have successfully navigated communication barriers perpetuates gender disparities in language development. Female children with hearing impairment often lack culturally relevant models of expressive language competence, contributing to persistent irregular language patterns and

reduced self-confidence in communication. Socialization practices have also restricted female children social interactions more than male children, limiting opportunities to practice expressive language with peers and adults (Krech, 2019).

Irregular language among school-aged hearing-impaired children in Nigeria is deeply intertwined with cultural beliefs about disability and gender. While hearing loss itself poses biological barriers to language acquisition, cultural communication practices, gender norms, teacher attitudes, and family expectations significantly influence how male and female children develop language. Female children often experience greater disadvantages due to restrictive cultural norms, lower communication stimulation, and reduced educational support.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design to assess gender-based cultural considerations of discriminatory attitude and irregular language in hearing-impaired school-aged children in Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey was chosen to determine and describe the nature and conditions of a phenomenon as it exists at the time of the study. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain data directly from the target population and describe their characteristics without manipulating any variables.

The population comprised 235 hearing-impaired students drawn from the selected schools: Shalom International School, Port Harcourt, and the Special School for Handicapped Children, opposite 68 Creek Road, Borokiri in the year 2020. The population included all hearing-impaired learners in Primary classes 1–6, Junior Secondary School (JSS 1–3), and Senior Secondary School (SSS 1–3).

A complete enumeration of all population members is known as a census inquiry. Given the relatively small population size and the need for maximum statistical confidence, the census sampling method was employed. This ensured that every hearing-impaired student in the selected schools participated in the study, thereby increasing the precision and reliability of the findings.

A total of 235 hearing-impaired students constituted the sample for this study. A sample is a subset of a population selected for investigation, while the method of selection is referred to as the sampling technique. Sampling enables researchers to collect relevant information about people, events, or objects, which collectively form what educational researchers call the target population or universe. Out of the 235 questionnaires distributed, 213 completed questionnaires were retrieved.

Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire titled “Assessment of Gender-Based Cultural Considerations of Discriminatory Attitude and Irregular Language in Hearing-Impaired School-Aged Children Questionnaire (AGBCCDAILHISACQ)”. The instrument comprised two sections: Section ‘A’ elicited demographic information such as gender, school type, parental socio-economic status, and class level; Section ‘B’ contained items that assessed gender-based cultural considerations of discriminatory attitude and irregular language in hearing-impaired school-aged children. Responses were rated using a modified four-point Likert scale: Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very Low Extent (1).

A research instrument is considered valid when it measures what it is intended to measure. Validity is the degree to which research results lead to accurate and meaningful conclusions. To ensure validity, the instrument was reviewed by experts in Special Needs Education and Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Psychology,

Guidance and Counselling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, as well as by the researcher's supervisor. Their recommendations and corrections were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

Reliability refers to the consistency with which an instrument measures an attribute. Reliability is the degree of agreement between repeated measures of the same concept. The reliability of the questionnaire was established using the test–retest method to determine internal consistency, both results yielded an average reliability coefficient index of .876, which highly acceptable and reliable.

The researcher, with the assistance of five trained research assistants, administered the questionnaire to the respondents through direct hand delivery. They remained on-site to provide clarification and ensure that the respondents completed the instrument correctly. Of the 235 questionnaires distributed, 213 were duly completed, returned, and used for analysis. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. Independent samples t-test statistics were employed to test the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent is discriminatory attitude a cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of discriminatory attitude a cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	I feel labeled and stigmatized as people refer to my disability and see more than they see me	3.2651	.69990	High Extent
2.	The discrimination attitude towards me some times frustrates my zeal to learn	3.1928	.92996	High Extent
3.	People see my education as a waste of time and money	3.1807	.70095	High Extent
4.	I feel rejected because people make fun of my inability	3.0723	.85230	High Extent
5.	I like to isolate myself to prevent being made fun of	2.9880	.78855	High Extent
Grand Mean and SD.		3.1393	.79433	High Extent

The purpose of research question one was to determine the extent to which discriminatory attitude is a cultural consideration affecting school-aged hearing-impaired children based on gender. The results presented in Table 1 showed that all five questionnaire items yielded mean scores that fall within the range interpreted as high extent, indicating that discriminatory attitudes are strongly perceived by the respondents.

The first item, “I feel labeled and stigmatized as people refer to my disability and see more than they see me,” recorded a mean score of 3.2651 with a standard deviation of .69990. This result demonstrated that hearing-impaired children experience a strong sense of being labeled and stigmatized, suggesting that cultural beliefs about disability significantly shape how others perceive them. The relatively low standard deviation also indicates that the responses were closely clustered, reflecting a shared experience among respondents.

The second item, “The discrimination attitude towards me sometimes frustrates my zeal to learn,” has a mean score of 3.1928 and a standard deviation of .92996. This shows that discriminatory attitudes have a considerable negative impact on the learning motivation of hearing-impaired children. The slightly higher standard deviation suggests more variation in how

discrimination affects their academic enthusiasm, though the general trend still points to a strong negative influence.

The third item, “People see my education as a waste of time and money,” produced a mean score of 3.1807 with a standard deviation of .70095. This indicates that many hearing-impaired children perceive that society, influenced by cultural norms, holds low expectations of their educational potential. The close clustering of responses again reflects common experiences among the participants.

The fourth item, “I feel rejected because people make fun of my inability,” showed a mean score of 3.0723 with a standard deviation of .85230. This demonstrates that feelings of rejection caused by ridicule are prevalent among the respondents. Although the mean is slightly lower than the first three items, it still indicates a high extent of discriminatory experiences.

The fifth item, “I like to isolate myself to prevent being made fun of,” recorded a mean score of 2.9880 and a standard deviation of .78855. Although the mean score is the lowest among the items, it still falls within the high extent category. This shows that discriminatory attitudes lead many hearing-impaired children to socially withdraw as a coping mechanism.

Overall, the grand mean of 3.1393 and grand standard deviation of .79433 confirmed that discriminatory attitude is perceived to a high extent as a cultural consideration affecting hearing-impaired school-aged children based on gender. The consistency of high mean scores across all items signifies that discriminatory cultural perceptions, stigma, labeling, ridicule, and negative expectations are widespread experiences among the population studied. These attitudes not only shape how hearing-impaired children are viewed within their communities but also influence their emotional well-being, social interactions, and academic motivation.

Research Question Two: To what extent is irregular language a cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of irregular language a cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
6.	My inability to communicate in regular language is a hindrance to my education	3.0482	.69675	High Extent
7.	I have social inadequacy due to my irregular language	3.2651	.79762	High Extent
8.	Making friends in school is difficult for me because of my inability to communicate in regular language	3.1566	.52919	High Extent
9.	My poor social skills in terms of communication in regular language is a problem to me	3.2771	.83100	High Extent
10.	I feel lonely because I am in my own world	3.3494	.67052	High Extent
Grand Mean and SD.		3.2192	.70501	High Extent

Research Question Two sought to determine the extent to which irregular language constitutes a cultural consideration affecting school-aged hearing-impaired children based on gender. The results presented in Table 2 revealed that all questionnaire items related to irregular language yielded mean scores classified as high extent, indicating that irregular language is widely perceived by respondents as a significant cultural factor influencing their experiences.

The sixth item, “My inability to communicate in regular language is a hindrance to my education,” recorded a mean score of 3.0482 with a standard deviation of .69675. This finding shows that an inability to use regular language poses a substantial barrier to the respondents’

educational progress. The standard deviation indicates relatively consistent responses, reflecting common educational challenges related to language irregularities.

The seventh item, “I have social inadequacy due to my irregular language,” has a mean score of 3.2651 and a standard deviation of .79762. This result highlights that irregular language strongly affects the social competence of hearing-impaired children. The fairly high mean underscores widespread feelings of social inadequacy, while the standard deviation shows some level of variation in how individuals experience this inadequacy.

The eighth item, “Making friends in school is difficult for me because of my inability to communicate in regular language,” produced a mean score of 3.1566 with a standard deviation of .52919. This indicates that irregular language significantly hinders peer relationships. The lower standard deviation suggests close agreement among respondents, reflecting a shared difficulty in forming friendships due to communication barriers.

The ninth item, “My poor social skills in terms of communication in regular language is a problem to me,” has a mean score of 3.2771 with a standard deviation of .83100. This result showed that respondents strongly perceive their limited communication skills as a challenge, particularly in social interactions. The higher standard deviation indicates more variability in individual experiences, but the overall high mean demonstrates the prominence of the issue.

The tenth item, “I feel lonely because I am in my own world,” recorded the highest mean score in the table, 3.3494, with a standard deviation of .67052. This finding reveals that loneliness is a significant emotional consequence experienced by hearing-impaired children, largely stemming from irregular language and the resulting communication difficulties. The consistent responses, reflected in the standard deviation, show that loneliness is a commonly shared emotional outcome among the population studied.

Overall, the grand mean of 3.2192 and the grand standard deviation of .70501 confirm that irregular language is perceived to a high extent as a cultural consideration among school-aged hearing-impaired children based on gender. The consistently high mean scores across all items indicate that irregular language affects multiple dimensions of these children’s lives including their academic functioning, social competence, peer relationships, emotional well-being, and overall sense of belonging.

These findings collectively demonstrated that irregular language is not merely a linguistic limitation but is deeply intertwined with cultural expectations, communication norms, and gender-related socialization patterns. Hearing-impaired children, regardless of gender, experience significant challenges due to their irregular language use; however, in cultural contexts where communication proficiency is highly valued, the impact may be more pronounced. The results highlighted the importance of culturally responsive and gender-sensitive interventions aimed at improving communication support, strengthening peer relationships, and addressing emotional challenges associated with irregular language.

Hypothesis One: Discriminatory attitude is not a significant cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender.

Table 3: t-test analysis of discriminatory attitude is not a significant cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	83	3.1398	.41641	-1.990	211	.064
Female	130	3.2400	.31637			

The first hypothesis stated that discriminatory attitude is not a significant cultural consideration of school-aged hearing-impaired children based on gender. To test this assumption, a t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of male and female hearing-impaired children on their experiences of discriminatory attitudes.

The results show that male students (N = 83) reported a mean discriminatory-attitude score of 3.1398 with a standard deviation of .41641, while female students (N = 130) reported a slightly higher mean score of 3.2400 with a standard deviation of .31637. Although females reported higher experiences of discriminatory attitudes than males, the difference between the two groups was tested for statistical significance.

The t-test yielded a t-value of -1.990 with 211 degrees of freedom, and the associated p-value was .064. Since the p-value of .064 is greater than the conventional significance level of .05, the difference between male and female students is not statistically significant.

Therefore, based on the statistical result, the null hypothesis is upheld. This means that discriminatory attitude does not significantly differ between male and female hearing-impaired school-aged children. Both genders experience discriminatory attitudes to a similar degree, and gender is not a major factor influencing how discriminatory attitudes manifest among hearing-impaired children in this study.

Hypothesis Two: Irregular language is not a significant cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender.

Table 4: t-test analysis of irregular language is not a significant cultural consideration of the school aged hearing impaired children based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	83	3.2193	.31174	-1.584	211	.115
Female	130	3.2815	.25723			

The second hypothesis proposed that irregular language is not a significant cultural consideration of school-aged hearing-impaired children based on gender. To test this hypothesis, a t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of male and female students regarding the extent to which irregular language affects them.

The results indicate that male students (N = 83) obtained a mean score of 3.2193 with a standard deviation of 0.31174, while female students (N = 130) recorded a slightly higher mean score of 3.2815 with a standard deviation of 0.25723. These results show that female students reported marginally higher challenges related to irregular language compared to males.

To determine whether this difference was statistically significant, a t-test analysis produced a t-value of -1.584 with 211 degrees of freedom, and the associated p-value was .115. Since the p-value of .115 is greater than the conventional significance level of .05, the observed difference between male and female students is not statistically significant.

Consequently, the null hypothesis is retained. This means that irregular language does not significantly differ between male and female hearing-impaired school-aged children. Gender is therefore not a determining factor in how irregular language challenges are experienced among the hearing-impaired children in this study. Both males and females are similarly affected.

DISCUSSION

Discriminatory Attitude and Hearing-Impaired Children Based on Gender

The results revealed that the consistency of high mean scores across all the five items signifies that discriminatory cultural perceptions, stigma, labeling, ridicule, and negative expectations are widespread experiences among the population studied, and discriminatory attitude does not significantly differ between male and female hearing-impaired school-aged children.

These findings are in line with the studies of Abang (2005), Oliver (2013) and Eleweke and Ebenso (2016). They found that discriminatory attitudes toward hearing-impaired children in Nigeria are shaped by deep-rooted cultural beliefs, social expectations, and gender norms that intersect to create unequal experiences for male and female children with hearing loss. Cultural ideologies about disability often influence how society perceives children with hearing impairment, and these perceptions can manifest in various forms of discrimination, ranging from stigmatization and exclusion to reduced access to educational and social opportunities. When these cultural attitudes combine with gendered expectations in the Nigerian context, female children with hearing impairment often face double disadvantages, while male children encounter distinct forms of bias linked to societal expectations of male competence, independence, and productivity. Some communities perceive disability as a sign of ancestral punishment or misfortune, resulting in emotional distancing, overprotection, or reduced investment in the child's education.

Similarly, Okombo (2019) found that within the school settings, discriminatory attitudes manifest through peer rejection, verbal ridicule, marginalization during class activities, and teachers' low expectations of hearing-impaired pupils. Also, (UNESCO, 2018) observed that male children with hearing impairment may experience discrimination linked to perceived incompetence or weakness relative to cultural expectations of masculinity, while female children face additional gender-based stereotypes that limit their participation in leadership activities, science-related subjects, and school leadership roles.

According to Eide and Ingstad (2017), discriminatory attitudes also influence access to resources and support services. Studies indicated that while male children with disabilities are more likely to be enrolled in school, female children with disabilities like hearing impairment are more likely to experience delayed school enrollment, early school dropout, and lack of access to assistive technologies. On the whole both male and female children encounter discrimination.

Evidence from Okiridu and Ubani (2022) study revealed that discriminatory attitudes toward hearing-impaired school-aged children in Nigeria are deeply rooted in cultural perceptions of disability and gender roles. However, male and female children face discrimination differently at different level.

Irregular Language and Hearing-Impaired Children Based on Gender

The findings from the results collectively demonstrated that irregular language is not merely a linguistic limitation but is deeply intertwined with cultural expectations, communication norms, and gender-related socialization patterns. Hearing-impaired children, regardless of gender, experience significant challenges due to their irregular language use; however, in cultural contexts where communication proficiency is highly valued, the impact may be more

pronounced, and the null hypothesis is retained. This means that irregular language does not significantly differ between male and female hearing-impaired school-aged children.

These findings are in line with Eleweke and Ebenso (2016) and Meadow-Orlans et al. (2004) studies when they found that irregular language patterns among school-aged hearing-impaired children in Nigeria are shaped by complex interactions between cultural norms, communication practices, and gender expectations. They further added that hearing impairment affects the natural acquisition of spoken language because language learning typically relies on auditory exposure, interaction, and reinforcement. They also noted that cultural attitudes toward disability and gender roles significantly influence how children with hearing loss acquire and use language, contributing to variations and irregularities in expressive and receptive communication skills.

Equally, Kluwin and Moores (2015) found that hearing-impaired children often develop irregular language patterns such as delayed speech, limited vocabulary, syntactic errors, and unconventional expressive forms. These irregularities are not solely a result of auditory deprivation; they are intensified by cultural communication norms that may discourage open, adaptive, and inclusive communication practices.

In the same vein, Eide and Ingstad (2017) and Okiridu and Ubani (2022) found that gender shapes how irregular language develops and how it is perceived in hearing-impaired children. They noted that female children with hearing-impaired disabilities often receive less communication stimulation than male children due to traditional gender socialization patterns that encourage male children to be more expressive and interactive, while female children are often conditioned toward passive communication roles. In many patriarchal cultures across Nigeria, male children are culturally encouraged to speak confidently and assertively, while female children are expected to adopt submissive, minimally expressive communication styles. However, they noted that both genders are discriminated against.

CONCLUSION

This study examined discriminatory attitude and irregular language as cultural considerations affecting school-aged hearing-impaired children based on gender in Rivers State. The findings revealed that both discriminatory attitudes and irregular language challenges are experienced to a high extent among hearing-impaired learners, regardless of gender. The mean scores from the descriptive analysis showed that students commonly face stigma, rejection, social isolation, and negative societal perceptions, all of which undermine their confidence and learning motivation. Similarly, irregular language significantly affects their social interactions, communication abilities, and overall emotional well-being, contributing to loneliness and reduced peer relationships.

However, the inferential statistics demonstrated that gender does not significantly influence the experience of either discriminatory attitudes or irregular language. The t-test results for both constructs showed no statistically significant differences between male and female students, which indicated that hearing-impaired learners face similar cultural barriers irrespective of gender. The study highlighted that the challenges encountered are largely systemic and rooted in societal attitudes, communication barriers, and cultural misconceptions about disability rather than gender-specific experiences.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

- Schools should implement inclusive communication strategies, including sign language training and speech support, to reduce discriminatory attitudes and promote equal educational opportunities for hearing-impaired children regardless of gender.
- Government and community agencies should raise awareness and provide support programs targeting families, teachers, and peers to challenge cultural misconceptions and enhance social integration for hearing-impaired school-aged children.

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