

Olusegun Emmanuel Afolabi

Department of Educational Foundation, Faculty of Education, University of Botswana

## Social Inequalities as Determinant of Variations in Parental Expectation for Involvement in Education of Learners with Special Needs (SENs) in Nigeria

**Abstract:** Although parent's involvement is growing in popularity all over the world, little systematic research has focused on parents' expectation for involvement in education of learners with special educational needs (SENs) in inclusive education. Grounded in the parental involvement literature, and using the Ecological and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1995) as theoretical and conceptual frameworks, this study investigate why there were considerable variations in parents' expectations for involvement in education of learners with (SENs) in Nigeria. The investigation is based on this research question: Do family structural characteristics, such as gender, marital status and education have significant influence on parental expectations for involvement in inclusive education in Nigeria? Employing a quantitative research method, this study gathered data from 372 parents of learners with SENs in 10 regular primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, and used a survey instrument on Parental Involvement in Inclusive Education (PII) for data collection. The study found that socio-cultural and economic values attached to marital status, education and gender, influenced the expectation for involvement among parents of learners with SENs in Nigeria. Finally the study recommended that government and educational administrators should embrace actions and programmes that promote parental expectations for involvement by establishing parents' support groups, where parents of learners with SENs can share their knowledge and work together in order to promote their children's learning in inclusive education.

**Key word:** Parent involvement; Expectations, Socio-inequalities, family structural characteristics, Inclusive education

## Introduction

As research continues to grow and build an ever-strengthening case on parental involvement in education, so is evidence on the subject consistently and convincingly shows that parents have a major influence on their children's learning. This considerable agreement and compelling evidences demonstrates that parents of learners with SENs have a substantial influence on their children's learning (Afolabi, Mukhopahday & Nenty 2013; Gershoff et al. 2007), and this was related to better learning outcome in education of learners with SENs (Afolabi 2014; Afolabi, Mukhopahday & Nenty 2015; Dahl & Lochner 2005; Hill & Taylor 2004). Despite this widespread acknowledgement and potential relationships between parental involvement and children's education, findings regarding differences in the expectations of parents on involvement have been inconsistent. As a result, the variation in parental involvement, the magnitude of its impact and the mechanism of the process, continue to be a matter of discuss amongst educators, researchers and parents (Gershoff et al., 2007). However, regardless of this problem, research continues to highlight the importance of parental involvement, particularly, in education of learners with SENs (Levy, Kim & Olive 2006).

Moreover, in much of the literature and drawing from the existing research on multiple contexts analysis of parental involvement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) the level of parents' involvement in education of their children is linked to the socio-inequalities in their environment (Grothaus 2010). This has its roots in research pointing out the relationship between sociological factors and parental involvement in children's schooling (Afolabi et al., 2015), and found to be strongly associated with parents' expectations for involvement. It also informed the reason why parents of learners with SENs are struggling to engage in their children's education (Armstrong, Kane, O'Sullivan, & Kelly 2010; Leyser & Kirk 2011). However, when parents are encouraged to participate in their children's schooling, they become more knowledgeable in school curriculum and processes (Hill & Taylor 2004), imparts learning to their children (Lareau 2000), enhance their children's perceptions of success and organize learning experiences that promote their skill development (Grolnick & Slowiaczek 1994). These effects made parental involvement more longer and lasting and helped in building a foundation for children's future success (Grolnick & Slowiaczek 1994).

While plethora of international research recognized parental involvement as relevant to education of learners with SENs, the process is still new in the developing countries like Nigeria. The inability of the government and the educational authority in Nigeria to recognize and encourage full participation of parents of learners with SENs in education of their children contributed to the low level of parental involvement practice reported in the country (Ajuwon, 2008). However, the success

of inclusive education in Nigeria is connected to the levels of parental involvement and expectations generally conceived by stakeholders in the educational sector (Ajuwon 2008). This is considered as investments that enhance parents' participation in education (Afolabi et al. 2013). Based on these forgoing, the systematic appraisal that gathers intuition on the views of parents of learners with SENs about their expectations for involvement in education of their children is necessary (Epstein 2009; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005; Davos-Kean & Sexton 2009).

## **The current study: a rationale**

The present study was envisioned in response to a number of interrelated issues on parental expectations for involvement in inclusive education. While researchers have long highlighted the relevance of parental involvement to children's learning (Afolabi et al. 2013, Afolabi 2014; Ferrara 2009; Gibson & Jefferson 2006), the process is still low in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, only few works have focused on parent's expectations for involvement in education of learners with SENs in inclusive education in Nigeria, specifically, on the mechanism, and variations in parental involvement practice. Therefore, this current study examines the relationship between family structural characteristics, i.e., marital status, education and gender and parental expectation for involvement in inclusive education. In addition, on the broader level, the study probes and adds to the knowledge base on parental involvement in education from parents' perspectives, an area where there have been calls for further research (Afolabi et. al. 2015).

Given the complexity of the subject and the gaps in the existing literature, this study raises two main questions:

- Are there any differences in the expectations of parents of learners with SENs on involvement in education of their children in inclusive education.
- What roles do family structural characteristics such as gender, age, income, marital status and education played in this variation.

## **Background information**

Parent's involvement has been shown over the years as one of the most puissant forces that promote the success of learners with SENs in inclusive education (United States Department of Education [USDOE 2010]). Also, the process promotes the education of learners with SENs with their typically-developing peers in mainstream schools. The success of inclusive education requires the school to believe in the competence of parents of learners with SENs to support their children's learning. At the same time, parents of learners with SENs must believe in their ability to develop positive expectations for involvement in their children's education.

Given the current policies of inclusive education, the involvement of parents of learners with SENs in their children's education is necessary (Afolabi et al. 2013, 2015). On the basis of this assumption, parents of learners with SENs must be encouraged to participate in their children. This would help parents to convey their values, preferences and expectations on education to their children, and in turn, children would learn and embrace their parents' behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and expectations on educational success.

Historically, the growing emphasis on parental involvement in education of learners with SENs in general classroom was ascribed to a number of factors. These include: 1) changes to national legislation, i.e., the reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 and 2004 that legally mandated educational authority to involve parents of learners with SENs in education of their children, and educate them in a least restrictive environment (LRE), (Griffin & Shevlin 2011), 2) the international developments and declaration, that is, the passing into law mandatory Free Universal Basic Education and the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights that supported the idea of inclusive education for learners with SENs and canvassed for parent's participation in their education, and 3) , the court's ruling, that is, the litigations from families of learners with SENs against the state, such as the cases of O'Donoghue (1993) and Sinnott (2000). These factors contributed immensely to address the issue of inequalities in educational sector, and created opportunities for parents of learners with SENs to become partners in education of their children (Griffin & Shevlin 2011).

Despite these benefits, several factors were reported to have influenced full participation of parents of learners with SENs in education of their children (Afolabi et al. 2015; Drummond & Stipek 2004; Hill, Tyson, & Bromell 2009). Among these factors, psychological and sociological characteristics played critical roles in driving parents of SENs children towards involvement in education of their children. These include parental expectations, beliefs, efficacy, culture, socio-economic background, attitude, gender, and education and family circumstances.

While these factors have long been reported to have influenced parents' expectation for involvement, the level at which this happened has not gone uncontested in education of learners with SENs. For example, only few studies (Afolabi et al. 2015; Cook, Shepherd, Cook, & Cook 2012; Ferguson 2008; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 2005) have systematically analysed them in the context of inclusive education. So, therefore, it is imperative for educators and government agencies to come up with strategies that would embrace parental involvement in inclusive education (Sheldon & Hutchins 2011; Cook et al. 2012). Unfortunately, these are relatively pursued in Nigeria, as parents of learners with SENs are struggling to involve in education of their children. Based on these gaps, this study was initiated to analyse the influence of social inequalities on parental expectation for involvement in education of learners with SENs in Nigeria.

## **Parental involvement in inclusive education through the lens of parents expectations**

Parental expectations for involvement are one of the most influential factors on education of learners with SENs (Afolabi, Mukhophadeyh & Nenty 2013; Georgiou 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1995; Lindsay & Dockrell 2004). This is particularly true for learners with disabilities (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001), as it was established that better understanding of parents' expectations is civically desirable and linguistically accepted in inclusive education (Afolabi 2014; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 2005). Recent support for this assertion is stated in a report from the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS, 2007) in which a link between family socio-cultural and economic background, expectations, home and school involvement on educational outcomes of learners with SENs was established (Blackorby, Levine, & Wagner 2007).

Besides, empirical literature on parental involvement also offered unswerving support to established a constructive association between parental expectations for involvement and children's learning (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli 1996; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 2005). According to these literatures, parental expectations consist of the attitudes that parents possess about involvement in education of their children. These attitudes are influenced by the fit between their choice of involvement actions, the school goals and their expectations for involvement. When parents' expectation and choice for involvement in their children education are correlated with the school expectation, parents influenced their children learning and behaviour positively, and children interpreted this action as indicative of their ability in school.

Also, the expectations that parents of learners with SENs had about participating in their children's schooling impacted on their children's expectations and attainment in life. This is in part, is due to the fact that parents' expectations in children learning are continuous all through the school years (Entwisle et al. 2005). For example, when parents of learners with SENs have higher expectations for involvement, their children believed they can perform better in school. Applied to social cognitive theory, "personal agency functions in a wide system of socio-structural and psychosocial settings in which parents' beliefs and expectations played a powerful regulative purpose" in their children's education (Bandura et al. 1996, p. 1207).

Additionally, parental expectations were identified as elements of home setting that overtly and covertly influenced children's behavioural and academic development (Reynolds & Walberg 1992). Therefore, parents with higher expectations for involvement are more probable of setting greater values for their children's education, compared to parents with lower expectations for involvement.

Also, parents with higher expectations for involvement are more likely to transfer standards of good performance to their children learning and also relates well with educators and other parents in their children's school. So, when parents have higher expectations in their children learning, the children shows more interest in their learning and set high standard, that is the grade they want to attain and career they want to follow (Dervarics 2011).

However, despite the widespread agreement and acknowledgement that parental involvement benefitted learners with SENs (U.S Department of Education 2002), effective relationship between parents 'expectation for involvement and school expectations for parents' participation are lacking (Ditrano & Silverstein 2006; Pinkus 2006). An overview of the work on the issue signifies that variations in parents 'expectations for involvement by social and cultural factors are not easy to understand. The mechanism by which these are formed and maintained is so complex that it affects the interpretation of expectations among parents of learners with SENs from different socio-cultural and economic background. This is due in part, to the social inequalities that characterised parents 'expectation for involvement in children's education (Rogers, 2003) and tension (Ditrano & Silverstein 2006; Pinkus 2006), and were more peculiar to parents of learners with SENs who are from lower social economic background (Ditrano & Silverstein 2006) and culturally and linguistically disadvantage (Ditrano & Silverstein 2006).

## **Variations in parental expectations for involvement in inclusive education by Social Inequalities**

Research has long argued that parental involvement is salient due to the high family structure characteristics, such as family dissolution rates, numerous two parents' working families, gender, and unique sociological pressures on parenting (Ferrara 2009; Gibson & Jefferson 2006). Research also posited several key factors as determinant of parent's expectations for involvement in their children's education. For instance, the status-attainment model suggests family structure characteristics, measured by parents' income, education level, and gender, occupation, exerts strong influences on parent's expectations for involvement in children's education (Chevalier, Gibbons, Thorpe, Snell, & Hoskins 2009). Further, the model maintained that, higher socioeconomic status promotes higher expectation for involvement and positive home-school environment that support children's learning. These factors influenced the level of parent's expectation for involvement in children's education (Boethel 2003).

Moreover, building on the traditional relationship between socio-economic background and parents' expectations for involvement, more recent studies have come up with the idea that parents' assets are important in forming parents' expectations for involvement (Williams-Shanks, Kim, Loke, & Destin 2010). While

parents of learners with SENs from lower socio-economic background may value their children's schooling highly, they might also likely be less engaged in schooling or resisted been involved (Drummond & Stipek 2004). Parents with lower qualification tend to have bad school experiences, and lack the self-efficacy for involvement. It is one thing to assert that higher socio-economic background yields, on average, higher parental involvement and children's educational outcomes than would otherwise be the case, if parents are from lower socio-economic background. Indeed, the proofs for this conclusion is robust and steady; especially when one take into accounts, more subtle components of parental involvement in children's education, particularly, the parents' assets (Jeynes 2007; Kim & Sheraden 2011).

The fact that only few works are primarily dedicated to analysing the perception of parents on involvement in inclusive education and the role of psychosocial factors makes the investigation on parental expectation for involvement in inclusive education paramount. This piece of evidence largely not only demonstrates a dearth of knowledge that exists regarding the parents' 'expectations for involvement in education of learners with SENs, but how sociological characteristics determine their level of involvement (Gibson & Jefferson 2006). Based on this gap in literature, there is a need for specific information on why parents of learners with SENs are differs in their expectations for involvement in education of their children.

One factor that answered this, and has gone unnoticed, is the perception of parents about relationship with school (Desimone 1999). Schools that care about parents' self-esteem or cultural inclination are more likely to understand parent concerned about children's school and why there are variation in their involvement (Epstein & Dauber 1991). Likewise, SENs children from families with limited resources be it social and cultural capital, or those from different ethno-culturally background that are different from the mainstream culture, would gain tremendously when their parents engage in their learning (Lee & Bowen 2006).

Additionally, research related variations in parent's expectations for involvement in children's education to other factors in their environment than income. Parent's structural family characteristics, singularly and collectively, play a significant role in parents' socio-ecology on involvement, and accounts for variations experienced by parents of learners with SENs in education of their children (Afolabi et al. 2015). The level of educational attainment or qualification of parents of learners with SENs influenced their expectations and efficacy for involvement in their children's education. For example, parents with lower educational qualification reported lower expectations for involvement in their children's learning (Afolabi et al. 2015; Houtenville & Conway 2008; Lareau 2000; Pena 2000). This shows that the level of educational attainment of parents of learners with SENs limits or enhances their efficacy and expectations for involvement, and also determines their level of interactions with their children's school.



In addition to educational attainment, research also established gender as a determinant of parent's expectations for involvement in children learning (Houtenville & Conway 2008). For example, it was found that there is a significant difference in the expectations for involvement in children's education, among father and mothers of learners with SENs, particularly on learning and development (Houtenville & Conway 2008). This means that fathers may choose to be less involved in their children's school activities, but more involved as mothers at home activities (Shumow & Miller 2001).

Another structural component that determines the level of expectations for involvement among parents of learners with SENs is the family structure (Houtenville & Conway 2008; Wagmillet al. 2010). This refers to as the parental make-up in a household, and determined by the number of children and parents in the family, and whether they are married or single. A study conducted by Afolabi (et al. 2015) and Houtenville & Conway (2008) on the role of demographic variable on parents of learners with SENs in inclusive education found that, single-parents of learners with SENs are less involved in education of their children than married parents. This finding was supported by two contending theories.

Firstly, it was argued that single-parents of learners with SENs are stressed and have lesser beliefs and expectations in their children's schooling, and as a result, they become less involved compared to married parents (Afolabi et al. 2015; Grolnick et al. 1994). Secondly, it was contended that married parents are more involved in their children's learning and less distracted from setting higher expectation for their children's schooling (Houtenville & Conway 2008). These analyses, however, supported the notion that the nature of household composition, determines parents' expectations for involvement and by extension, their interactions with school. Therefore, having an additional adult cohabitant in a household could potentially influence the level of home –school interactions in two ways: First, it could increase parent's expectation for involvement in their children's education by offering an additional actor or care giver that support the primary caregiver, and secondly, it could act as a time commitment to the primary caregiver in their engagement with school. Based on this, this study investigates the influence of social inequalities variables on parents' expectations for involvement in education of learners with SENs in Nigeria.

## Theoretical framework

This study was founded on ecological model by Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998 and supported by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997. These models maintained that the interactions between home and school are critical for supporting positive learning outcomes in children. The model also posited that the independent influence of each setting coupled with the unique interactions of home



and school influenced children's learning and development (El Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal 2010; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker & Sandler 2005). However, parents' involvement is rarely examined from the parents' perspectives, and this is a notable oversight, given the light that parents play a significant role in determine the frequency and quality of their children's education (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker & Sandler 2005).

While research have long related emotionally supportive teachers' practices with a series of positive socio-emotional outcomes for children (Carson & Templin 2007; Jennings & Greenberg 2009), little has been done on the interactive influence of parents' emotional and social support for school involvement. This current study aimed to address these limitations in the extant literature by examining the interactive effect of parent's distinct psychological and social factors on involvement in education of learners with SENs. Therefore, a conceptual model of parental involvement was proposed in this study based on the ecological and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997 model.

## Conceptual framework

There have been a number of attempts both nationally and internationally to provide additional structure and meaning to the concept of parental involvement in children's education, through the advancement of different frameworks. This study would build on this by proposed a conceptual framework that would critically reflect on and improve parental involvement policies and practice in inclusive education. Research into the way in which parents of learners with SENs perceives their involvement in education of their children point towards difficulties that arises at the micro and meso level interaction, particularly, the relationship and the consequence.

The proposed conceptual framework (see Figure 2) addressed this, by analysed the interactions between home and school, as well as the psychological and social dimensions of parental involvement in inclusive education. Specifically, the framework provided a useful viewpoint for examining sociological variables that influence parental involvement practice in inclusive education.

The model illustrated how sociological variables i.e., education, socioeconomic status, marital status and gender impact on parents expectations for involvement in education of learners with SENs in inclusive education. Sociological factors such as socioeconomic status (SES), marital status, gender, parents' level of education were explained in this framework as independent variables, and were theoretically associated with parents' expectations, and explained as causal factors that influence parental involvement in education of learners with SENs in inclusive schools (dependent variable).

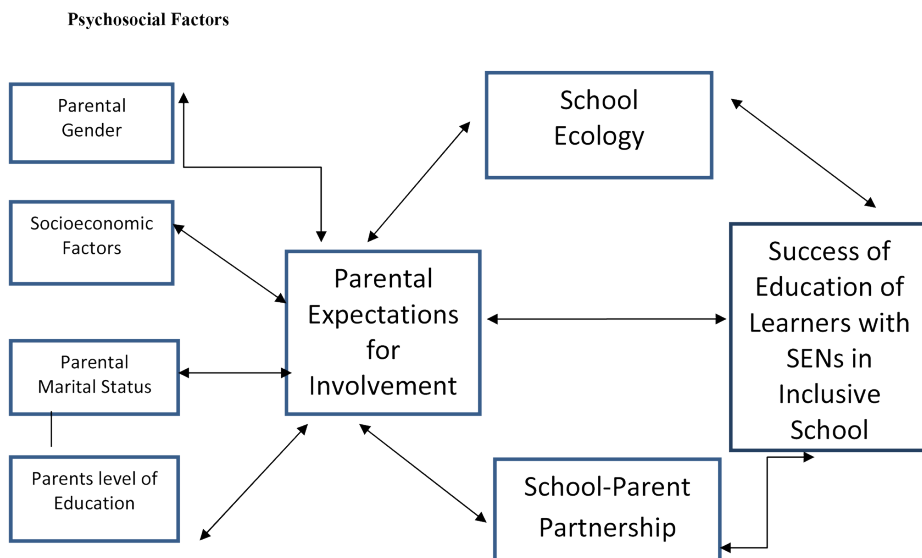


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

As a multifaceted factor, the variables interacted with each other, and this interactions played significant role in determine the expectations of parents of learners with SENs for involvement in education of their children. For instance, the socioeconomic background, coupled with the level of education, influenced the expectations of parents of learners with SENs on involvement in education of their children. Also, parents of learners with SENs who are from lower socio-economic background, and have lower education tend to displayed unconcerned behaviour and poor engagement with their children's school. In addition, parents from lower socioeconomic and cultural background developed lower expectations for involvement and viewed participation in school related activities as unwelcome and unproductive. This negative beliefs and expectations, limited their support and participation in their children's learning.

Also, parents' expectations for involvement depend on family structural characteristics that were supported by positive school climate that embraced home-school partnership, and promote success of learners with SENs in inclusive education. At the same time, a success of education of learners with SENs depends on home-school collaboration that was grounded on positive school climate, that sustained family's structure characteristics, and promote parental expectation for involvement in inclusive education. Overall, parents of learners with SENs who are supported by life setting variables that permitted and reinforced robust participation in education of their children would develop higher expectations for involvement which leads to the success of their children's education.

## Method

### Research Setting

This research was conducted in the city of Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, Nigeria. Oyo state is located in the South West part of Nigeria, with a population of around 8 million people and Ibadan, the capital has a population of about 1,400,000 children, aged between 15yrs and below. The city of Ibadan consists of 10 Local Government Councils and rated as the second largest city in Africa after Cairo, Egypt. A list of the government and private-owned primary schools within Ibadan Municipality was obtained from the State Primary Education Board (SPED), and those that have already implemented inclusive education were purposefully selected for this research.

### Research Design

An exploratory quantitative research design (Martyn 2008) was utilized to explore the perceptions of parents of learners with SENs on expectations for involvement in education of their children in inclusive education. This design enabled uncomplicated description and reporting of data collected quantitatively. Although survey methods have several weaknesses, the researcher used the field survey research method in order to obtain the views of parents of learners with SENs on their expectations for involvement in their children's learning.

### Participants

The population in this study consists of the total number of parents of learners with SENs, attending mainstream primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State. Due to lack of specific statistics on learners with SENs attending inclusive education in Ibadan, Nigeria, WHO's 10% criteria were used (UNAIDS/WHO 2003). Using these criteria, the targeted population of this study comprised of 10040 parents of learners with SENs. In order to determine the sample size for this study, a sample size calculator was used (Survey systems, n.d). The researcher entered the *confidence level and population* of parents of learners with SENs; and 372 sample sizes were obtained. To achieve a sample size of 372, multistage sampling was used. The researcher selected one school from each 10 Local Government Councils in Ibadan and its surrounding areas randomly. Thereafter, 38 parents of learners with SENs from each school was selected with the help of primary 5 and 6 teachers in each school using snowball sampling (Atkinson & Flint 2001).

## Instrumentation

A survey instrument was used to measure the expectations of parents of learners with SENs about involvement in inclusive education. This instrument was adapted based on extensive review of the current literature on inclusion and parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997). This attitude survey consists of two sections, The first section consists of background information on the respondent's gender marital status, education and their child's age, grade, gender types, disability, and exposure to inclusion and non-inclusion classroom settings. Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate their experiences of participation in their children's education. The second section contains parental involvement in inclusive education (PII) scale. This scale measured parent perception of expectations, using a six-point scale. Parents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "Other parents expect me to be involved in my child's education." They were provided with the following response options: "strongly agree," "agree," "somewhat agree," "somewhat disagree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree." The scales were originally designed by Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues (Hoover-Dempsey & Jones 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997) and were adapted for this study.

## Procedure

Parents of learners with special needs in 10 selected regular/primary school in Ibadan and its surrounding areas were purposively selected and administered questionnaires in order to investigate their perception of expectations for involvement in inclusive education. This survey uses quantitative response formats (i.e. agree or disagree). The survey packets were given to parents' of learners with SENs by their children's teachers during parent meetings and parent-teacher conferences. The survey packets contained a cover letter, the survey questionnaires, a business reply envelope. The parent survey packet also contained a brief explanation of what inclusion means, what the study is about, and the steps parents need to take in order to participate in the study. After 3 weeks, follow-up phone calls were made to the schools to remind them to collect the parent survey packets.

## Data Analysis

The researcher used standard statistical data analysis approaches such as descriptive and inferential analysis, i.e. (t-test for independent variable) Descriptive statistics was computed for the variable and also for the demographic variables i.e., (education, marital status and gender). A t-test was used in order to compares the actual difference between two means in relation to the variation in the data

(expressed as the standard deviation of the difference between the means).Statistical significance was determined by an alpha of .05

## Results

### Demographic Information

This section explains the socio-demographic characteristic of parents of learners with special educational needs from 10 primary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria, who participated in the study. Three hundred and forty seven questionnaires were sent out, of which only 320(91%) were returned; (see Table 1) below.

Table 1. Marital status, educational and gender characteristic of parents’ participant

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Marital Status		
Married	259	80.9
Single	61	19.1
Total	320	100
Educational Level		
Secondary Education	73	22.8
University Education	247	77.2
Total	320	100
Gender		
Male	66	20.6
Female	254	79.4
Total	320	100

The results revealed that the vast majority of parents ‘participants 259 (80.9%), were married (see Table 2 above). While 61 (19.1%) specified that they were single. The disparity in this figure can be seen as justification for having marital status as a variable that determine the level of expectations for involvement among parents of learners with SENs in education of their children. Similarly, the level of education of parents ‘participants are associated with their expectations for involvement. As revealed in Table 2 above, high proportion of parents of learners with SENs accomplished university education 247 (77.2%) while less than half of the parents ‘participants73 (22.8%) indicated that they had secondary education. On gender, the descriptive analysis revealed that, majority of parents of learners with SENs who participated in the study 254 (79.4%) indicated they are female ‘parents, while only 66 (20.6%) of the parents indicated that they were male. This information should be taken seriously, as it shows the

patterns of variation in parents 'expectation for involvement in inclusive education in Nigeria.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, and n for Subscales (n = 320)

Subscales	No. of Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Parental expectations for involvement	6	18.00	73.00	24.71	5.26

To determine whether there were differences in expectations for involvement among parents of learners with SENs in Nigeria, the hypothesis below was proposed and tested

*Hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences between parents of learners with SENs on their expectation for involvement in education of their children based on their marital status, education and gender.*

### Relationship between Parental Expectation for Involvement and Marital Status

To test the above hypothesis, parents 'score on the parental expectations for involvement subscale was used as dependent variables and parents' marital status was used as independent variable. The independent sample t-test was used to assess the differences between parents 'marital status and expectations for involvement in inclusive education (see Table 3). The mean and standard deviations of married parents on parental expectations for involvement subscale were calculated as (M = 24.74, SD = 5.77), while that of single parents were (M = 24.55, SD = 1.95). The results showed that at a critical value of .05, there was a statistically significant difference ( $t = .256$ ,  $p < .05$ ), between married and single parents of learners with SENS on expectations for involvement in inclusive education in Nigeria. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. The direction of the relationship suggested that married and single parents are differing in their expectations for involvement in education of their children in inclusive education.

Table 3. Results of t-Test Analysis of Influence of Parents' Marital Status on Parental Expectations

	Marital status	n	Mean (PE)	Std. Deviation	df	t	P
Parental Expectation (PE)	Married	259	24.74	5.77	318	0.265 > .05	0.01
	Single	61	24.55	1.95			

This finding could be attributed to the fact that married parents of learners with SENs have higher expectations for involvement, showed more concern about their children's education and more highly involved in education of their children than single parents.

### Relationship between Parental Expectation for Involvement and Educational Status

Independent t-test was used to access the difference between parents of learners with SENs with lower education (secondary education) and those with higher education (university education), and their mean and standard deviation on parental expectations subscale were calculated (see Table 4). The mean and standard deviation of parents of learners with SENs were ( $M = 25.06$ ,  $SD = 5.86$ ), while that of parents with lower education were ( $M = 23.50$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ). Comparison of parental expectation for involvement scores in inclusive education were explored between the two groups of parents. The result showed that there was a statistically significant difference between parents of learners with SENs who had higher education (university) and parents who had lower education (secondary) on expectations for involvement in inclusive education, ( $t = -2.24$ ,  $df = 318$ ,  $p = > .05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4. Results of t-Test Analysis of Influence of Parents' Educational Status on Parental Expectations

	Educational status	n	Mean (PE)	Std. Deviation	df	t	P
Parental expectation (PE)	Secondary education	23.50	23.50	1.79	318	-2.24	0.05
	University education	247	25.06	5.86			

This could be attributed to the fact that parents with lower education (secondary education) displayed lower expectations for involvement in education of their children and lacked the skills to effectively help their children to succeed in inclusive education, compared to parents with higher education (university).

### Relationship between Parental Expectation for Involvement and Gender

The mean and standard deviation of male and female parents of learners with SENs on expectations subscale were calculated and reported as ( $M = 24.31$ ,  $SD = 2.30$ ), ( $M = 26.22$ ,  $SD = 10.59$ ) respectively (see Table 5). The independent t-test was run to test if there is significant difference between the two groups of



parents of learners with SENs on expectation for involvement. The results ( $t = 2.65$ ,  $df = 318$ ,  $p = < .05$ ) showed that at significant level of .05, there was a significant difference between male and female parents of learners with SENs on expectations for involvement in inclusive education in Nigeria. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5. Results of t-Test Analysis of Influence of Parents' Gender on Parental Expectations

	Gender status	n	Mean (PE)	Std. Deviation	df	t	P
Parental expectation (PE)	Male	66	24.31	2.30	318	2.65	< 0.05
	Female	254	26.22	10.59			

The direction of the relationship shows that male and female parents of learners with SENs are differing in their expectations for involvement in education of their children in Nigeria.

The results suggested that female parents of learners with SENs have higher expectations for involvement, and committed to education of their children in inclusive education in than the male parents in Nigeria.

## Discussion, conclusion and recommendation

The study aimed at gaining a better understanding of parents' expectation for involvement in children's education. It investigates why there were variations in expectations of parents of learners with SENs on involvement. Interestingly, parents' of learners with SENs were found in the current study to be differs in their expectations for involvement in inclusive education. Research affirmed that, parent's expectations for involvement persisted throughout a child's school years and vital for children's educational success (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey 2005). The expectations that parents have about their children learning influenced their decisions to get involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997). This study aligned with these findings and contributed to literature on parental expectations for involvement in inclusive education. The study addressed various dimensions in which parental variables (i.e., marital, gender and education) influenced the expectations of parents on involvement. It was found that marital status, gender and education significantly influenced the level of expectations of parents of learners with SENs about involvement in education of their children in inclusive schools.

For example, parents of learners with SENs with higher educational qualifications developed higher expectations for involvement, set higher values and standard for their children learning, developed their children's socio-cognitive

functioning and contributed to the success of their children's education in inclusive setting, than parents with lower level of education (Davis-Kean 2005). This assertion was supported in the review of literature on parental involvement, as well as the conceptual framework developed in the current study as a single predictor of parents' expectations for involvement above other variables, such as family size, household income and child's gender (Olsen & Fuller 2008)

In addition, the findings of this study affirmed that marital status influenced the expectations for involvement among parents of learners with SENs (Boer, Pillji, & Minnaert 2010). Specifically, it was found that marital status and gender had positive attitudinal and behavioural effects on the expectations of parents of learners with SENs about involvement in education of their children. This means that family structure as quantified in this study as marital status and gender do not only influenced parents' views on involvement, but also influenced their level of expectations for involvement in their children's learning. Therefore, parent's socio-economic and cultural background, that is, marital status, education and gender of parents of learners with SENs, influenced the way they viewed their involvement activities, and the way their children's schools responded to their participation (Welsch & Zimmer 2008).

Overall, the socio-cultural and economic values attached to marital status education and gender, influenced the expectations of parents of learners with SENs on involvement in education of their children in Nigeria. As a result, the socio-inequalities among parents of learners with SENs are more noticeable in their expectations for involvement in school activities. The distinct perception and the values attached to parents' social and cultural background, informed parents' choice of involvement and expectations in children's education (Ryndak, Storch & Hoppey 2008).

## Limitations and directions for future research

The first limitation in the current study is that the sample was restricted to parents of learners with SENs in Ibadan, Nigeria. Thus, it is unknown if the results can be generalized to represent parents of children with SEN in other part of Nigeria. Therefore, further research should be carried out with groups that are more representative of parents of learners with SENs in other parts of Nigeria. Second, the variables of interest in this study were restricted to parents' perceptions of their expectations for involvement, and did not investigate the expectations of children and teachers, with regard to parental involvement in inclusive education. Therefore, future research should focus on other variables, such as the views and expectations of teachers and children on parental involvement in inclusive education in Nigeria and the role that psychological and sociological factors played in this interactions.

Based on the findings in this study, government and educational administrators should place more emphasis on actions and programmes that promote parental involvement in inclusive education, with a strong focus on parents of learners with SENs with lower levels of education and those who lack the pedagogical knowledge of the specific individual educational needs of children with SEN. Ways to achieve this goal would be for educational authority to promote the establishment of parents of support groups where the parents can share their knowledge and work together to promote their children's education.

Further, school should do more to adjust and appreciate the socio-inequalities among parents of learners with SENs, especially those from lower social-economic background, so that they can feel more important and relevant to their children's education. Also school should be encouraged parents as partners in their children's education. To this end, school should diversify their communication to meet the needs of each parent and provide necessary support to empower and promote their participation in education of their children.

It can be expected that, if government and school administrator pursue such activities, more and more parents of learners with SENs will appreciate the need to partake more in education of their children. Therefore, having greater expectations for involvement among parents would facilitate and promote children's education. In this manner, better learning outcomes for learners with SENs in inclusive school may be expected.

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