

## ENHANCING TEACHER ENGAGEMENT IN DYSGRAPHIA MANAGEMENT TRAINING: THE ROLE OF COUNSELING FOR VALUE REORIENTATION

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### Abstract

*Dysgraphia, a prevalent specific learning disability (SLD) affecting children globally, presents significant challenges in writing skills and socio-emotional well being. This study addresses the dearth of literature on teachers' participation in dysgraphia management training in Nigeria, particularly Ibadan. A descriptive survey design involving 240 primary school teachers from 20 schools utilised stratified random sampling and a validated questionnaire (TEDTQ) with a Cronbach's alpha reliability value of 0.83. Data was analysed using percentages and T-test. Results revealed a predominance of female teachers (74.2%), highlighting a need for gender-inclusive training approaches. 81.7% of teachers expressed interest in future training, with 71.7% willing to pay for training and majority favouring shorter programmes, indicating a necessity for flexible training schedules. Most teachers acknowledged the importance of ongoing training, emphasising a commitment to continuous professional development. While gender influenced attitudes towards training positively among female teachers, no significant differences were observed based on teaching level, school type, or professional qualification. However, experienced teachers exhibited more positive attitudes. Recommendations include designing intensive training programmes, accommodating diverse preferences, encouraging female participation, supporting ongoing professional growth, and integrating counselling for attitudinal shifts. These efforts can foster a supportive and inclusive educational environment crucial for addressing dysgraphia effectively and promoting students' holistic well-being.*

**Keywords:** Counselling, Dysgraphia, Inclusion, Teacher Training, Value Reorientation

### Introduction

Around 10-30% of children globally are impacted by dysgraphia, a specific learning disability (SLD) stemming from neurological causes. According to Chung, Patel & Nizami (2020),

dysgraphia is described as a condition in which a person's writing skills fall below the expected level for the person's age, intelligence, and level of education. It is characterised by significant challenges in performing writing tasks – including issues related to fine-motor coordination, writing legibility, sentence structure, writing speed, manipulation of writing tools, maintaining appropriate writing posture, writing accuracy, and fluency in written expression- which is not caused by any physical impairment, intellectual impairment, socio-economic limitation, instructional inadequacies and has persisted (for about six months) despite exposure to targeted conventional interventions (Chung, et al. 2020).

The challenges faced by pupils with dysgraphia extend beyond their writing difficulties, impacting their psycho-social well-being. These individuals often experience frustration, possess a negative academic self-concept and self-esteem, stigmatisation from peers, feel ashamed, and may face social isolation (Ahmad & Ansari, 2022). Without timely diagnosis and proper management, dysgraphia tends to persist into adulthood, posing considerable challenges throughout life. It is worth mentioning that this SLD typically become apparent in early childhood, often before the age of seven (Biotteau, Danna, Baudou, Puyjarinet, Velay, Albaret, & Chaix, 2019). This developmental stage is critical as children are expected to begin mastering the fundamental skills of handwriting.

Since teachers are the primary teachers responsible for teaching writing skills to pupils, they are usually the first to notice any challenges related to writing abilities in children with dysgraphia. This early identification is crucial as it allows for timely interventions and support to address the writing difficulties and prevent them from impacting the child's academic progress and self-esteem negatively.

Recognising the crucial role teachers play in supporting students with dysgraphia, it is essential to highlight the significance of their active involvement in training programs aimed at effectively addressing the multifaceted challenges associated with this SLD. According to Graham and Harris (2000), teachers' participation in such training programs is essential in enhancing their understanding and ability to support students with dysgraphia effectively. Mensah, Abraham, & Theresa (2022) further emphasised the importance of teachers acquiring knowledge about dysgraphia, given their role as primary writing instructors for these learners. This understanding is crucial for establishing an inclusive educational setting that addresses the diverse requirements of learners.

These training programs can take various forms, including pursuing degrees or certifications in special education or learning disability courses. Such formal education equips teachers with in-depth knowledge, strategies, and tools specifically tailored to support students with dysgraphia. Additionally, participating in conferences, workshops, seminars, engaging in personal research, and leveraging other educational resources can also contribute significantly to teachers' professional development in addressing dysgraphia effectively. By actively engaging in these programs, teachers can enhance their instructional practices, develop targeted intervention strategies, implement appropriate accommodations, and foster a supportive learning environment conducive to the success of students with dysgraphia.

Research on this subject has predominantly concentrated on the difficulties encountered in instructing learners with dysgraphia and the level of expertise among teachers regarding dysgraphia. (King'endo and Njoki, 2015; Feizefu, 2021; Buğday, 2022) leaving a noticeable gap in literature and information regarding teachers' participation or exposure to specialised training programs aimed at addressing dysgraphia, thus the need for this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Dysgraphia, a specific learning disability, impacts many children globally, presenting obstacles in writing skills that can detrimentally affect their academic and psychosocial wellbeing. Without early diagnosis and intervention from trained teachers, these challenges may persist into adulthood. Despite this challenge, there is a notable scarcity of literature and resources concerning teachers' participation or exposure to specialised training programs aimed at addressing dysgraphia in Nigeria. This study aims to bridge this gap and contribute valuable knowledge to enhance teachers' capacity in supporting students with dysgraphia effectively.

### **Objectives**

1. Evaluating the prior participation, interest, and willingness of the participants (primary school teachers in Ibadan) regarding dysgraphia management training programs.
2. Investigating the perception the participants regarding the necessity and frequency of dysgraphia management training programs in schools.
3. Examining potential differences in attitudes towards dysgraphia management training programs based on demographic factors such as gender, level of instruction, school type (public/private), years of teaching experience, and professional qualification.
4. Determining factors influencing primary school teachers' engagement in dysgraphia management training programs in Ibadan.

### **Research Questions**

1. How much prior experience do participants have with dysgraphia management training programs?
2. How interested are the participants in participating in upcoming training programs focused on managing dysgraphia in the future?
3. What is the willingness of the participants to participate in paid and free dysgraphia management training programs?
4. What is the perception of the participants regarding the necessity and frequency of dysgraphia management training programs in schools?

### **Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** There is no statistically significant distinction in teachers' attitudes towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on gender.

**Ho2:** There is no statistically significant distinction in teachers' attitudes towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on their level of instruction.

**Ho3:** There is no statistically significant distinction between in teachers' attitudes towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on school type.

**Ho4:** There is no statistically significant distinction in teachers' attitudes towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on years of teaching experience.

**Ho5:** There is no statistically significant distinction in teachers' attitudes towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on professional qualification.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive survey *design*. 240 teachers from 20 public and private schools in Ibadan who were selected using the stratified random sampling method made up the study *sample*. A self-structured questionnaire (Teachers' Engagement in Dysgraphia Training Questionnaire (TEDTQ)) was developed, the questionnaire comprised six sections which was designed to gather demographic data and information related to the study. The questionnaire was carefully reviewed by experts and demonstrated strong reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83. Data was analysed using percentages and t-test.

**Results**

**Table 1:** Participant Profile (N = 240)

Study Parameters	No of teachers	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	62	25.8
Female	178	74.2
<b>Level of instruction</b>		
Pre basic classes	84	35
Basic classes	156	65
<b>Teaching experience</b>		
10 years and below	83	34.6
Above 10 years	157	65.4
<b>School type</b>		
Public school	144	60
Private school	96	40
<b>Professionalism</b>		
Nonprofessional teachers	27	11.3
Professional teachers	213	88.7

The participant profile of the study sample (N = 240) indicates a predominance of female teachers, comprising 74.2% of the respondents, while male teachers constitute 25.8%. In terms of the level of instruction, 35% of the teachers are involved in pre-basic classes, while 65% handle basic classes. Regarding teaching experience, 34.6% have ten years of experience or less, while 65.4% have more than ten years of experience. The distribution between public and private school teachers shows that 60% work in public schools, with the remaining 40% in private schools. In terms of professionalism, 88.7% of the teachers are professional, while 11.3% non-professional.

**Research question 1:** How much prior experience do participants have with dysgraphia management training programs?

**Table 2:** Prior participation of the participants in dysgraphia management training programs

Training type	Yes		No	
	Number of teachers	%	Number of teachers	%
Courses	105	43.8	135	56.2
Conferences/seminars	88	36.7	152	63.3
Degree programme	52	21.7	188	78.3
Teacher association programmes	81	33.7	159	66.3
Personal study	100	41.7	140	58.3
Workshops	78	32.5	162	67.5

The data from Table 2 reveals that among the respondents, a considerable number have engaged in various forms of training. Specifically, 43.8% of teachers have taken courses, 36.7% have attended conferences or seminars, and 21.7% have pursued formal degree programs related to dysgraphia management. Additionally, 33.7% have participated in programs organised by teacher associations, 41.7% have undertaken personal study, and 32.5% have attended workshops on this topic. Conversely, a higher percentage of teachers have not participated in these training avenues, ranging from 56.2% to 78.3%.

**Research question 2:** How interested are the participants in participating in upcoming training programs focused on managing dysgraphia in the future?

**Table 3** Teachers' interest in future training programmes on dysgraphia management

Response	N	%
Interested	196	81.7
Not interested	44	18.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>

The data from Table 3 reflects primary school teachers' interest in future dysgraphia management training programs. Out of the total respondents (N = 240), a significant majority, constituting 81.7%, expressed interest in participating in such future training programs. On the other hand, 18.3% of teachers indicated no interest in these training programs.

**Research question 3:** What is the willingness of the participants to participate in paid and free dysgraphia management training programs?

**Table 4:** Teachers' willingness to participate in dysgraphia management training programmes.

Mode of training program	Teachers' response			
	Yes	%	No	%
Free training	205	85.4	35	14.6
Paid training	172	71.7	68	28.3

The results from Table 4 show the willingness of primary school teachers in Ibadan to participate in both paid and free dysgraphia management training programs. In terms of free training programs, majority of teachers, accounting for 85.4%, expressed their willingness to participate, while 14.6% indicated a lack of interest. On the other hand, for paid training programs, a slightly lower percentage of teachers, specifically 71.7%, showed a positive inclination towards participation, while 28.3% showed a preference for not participating.

**Research question four:** What is the perception of the participants regarding the necessity and frequency of dysgraphia management training programs in schools?

**Table 5:** Perception of the necessity and frequency of dysgraphia management training programs in schools

Necessity of training programmes	N	%
Yes	220	91.7
No	20	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100.0</b>

  

Frequency of training programmes	N	%
Every term	93	38.8
Every session	79	32.9
Annually	51	21.3
Bi-annually	17	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 reveals that in terms of necessity, 91.7% of the 240 respondents expressed a positive perception, affirming the need for such training programs, while 8.3% indicated a negative perception. Regarding the frequency of these training programs, the responses varied: 38.8% recommended training every term, 32.9% preferred training every session, 21.3% suggested annual training, and 7.1% recommended bi-annual training.

**Testing the hypotheses**

**H01:** There is no statistically significant distinction in teachers’ attitudes towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on gender.

**Table 6:** T-test comparison attitude towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programmes based on gender

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	p-value
Male	62	7.0484	1.24700	238	-4.047	1.96	0.000
Female	178	7.8876	1.45702				

**Significance level ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05**

Table 6 displays the results of a t-test comparison examining the attitudes of male and female teachers towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs. The analysis revealed a statistically significant distinction between the two groups ( $t(238) = -4.047, p < 0.001$ ). Specifically, male teachers ( $M = 7.05, SD = 1.25$ ) exhibited a lower mean attitude score compared to female teachers ( $M = 7.89, SD = 1.46$ ) regarding participation in dysgraphia management training programs. Thus, the null hypotheses was rejected.

**H02:** There is no statistically significant distinction in the attitudes of teachers towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on level of instruction.

**Table 7:** T-test comparison attitude towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programmes based on level of instruction

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	p-value
Pre-basic teachers	84	8.0000	2.29195	238	-1.304	1.96	0.193
Basic teachers	156	8.3654	1.94135				

**Significance level ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05**

Table 7 shows the t-test comparison between teachers in pre-basic and basic classes on their attitude towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programmes. The analysis revealed no statistically significant distinction between the two groups ( $t(238) = -1.304, p < 0.193$ ). Therefore, based on these results, the null hypothesis was not rejected

**H03:** There is no statistically significant distinction in teachers’ attitudes towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on school type.



**Table 8:** t-test comparison teachers attitude towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programmes based on school type

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	p-value
<b>Public school</b>	144	8.1042	2.19892	238	-1.221	1.96	0.223
<b>Private school</b>	96	8.4375	1.86272				

**Significance level ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05**

Table 8 reveals the t-test comparison between teachers from public and private schools on their attitude towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programmes. The analysis revealed no statistically significant distinction between the two groups ( $t(238) = -1.221, p < 0.223$ ). Therefore, based on the result obtained, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

**HO4:** There is no statistically significant distinction in the attitudes of teachers towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on years of teaching experience.

**Table 9:** t-test comparison of teachers attitude towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programmes based on years of teaching experience

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	p-value
<b>10 years and below</b>	83	8.6627	1.97099	238	2.331	1.96	0.021
<b>Above 10 years</b>	157	8.0127	2.09697				

**Significance level ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05**

Table 9 shows the t-test comparison between teachers with 10 years or less of experience and those with more than 10 years of experience on their attitude towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programmes. The analysis revealed a statistically significant distinction between the two groups ( $t(238) = 2.331, p < 0.021$ ). Therefore, based on these results, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Ho5:** There is no statistically significant distinction in teachers’ attitudes towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programs based on professional qualification.

**Table 10:** t-test comparison teachers on their attitude towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programmes based on professional qualification

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	p-value
Non-professional teachers	27	8.2222	2.18972	238	-0.041	1.96	0.968
Professional teachers	213	8.2394	2.06360				

**Significance level ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.05**

Table 12 shows that the t-test comparison between professional and non-professional teachers on their attitude towards engagement in dysgraphia management training programmes. The analysis revealed no statistically significant distinction between the two groups ( $t(238) = -0.041, p < 0.968$ ). Therefore, based on the result obtained, the null hypothesis was not rejected

**Discussion**

Table 2 emphasises a notable gap in formal education's provision of dysgraphia management training. This aligns with Rose's (2001) study, indicating a general lack of professional experience among teachers in handling learning disabilities like dysgraphia. The findings suggest a need for enhanced training initiatives in teacher education programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills to address such challenges effectively.

The interest among teachers for dysgraphia management training, as indicated in Tables 3 and 4, reflects a positive attitude towards professional development. However, the preference for shorter and less intensive programs highlights the importance of designing training modules that cater to teachers' preferences and time constraints. This aligns with McCloskey & Rapp's (2017) observation regarding the need for more comprehensive and specialised training opportunities tailored to teachers' needs.

Table 5 emphasises teachers' consensus on the necessity of ongoing dysgraphia management training programs, reflecting their strong commitment to continuous professional development. This aligns with McCloskey & Rapp's (2017) submission regarding teachers' dedication to enhancing their skills in managing dysgraphia within the classroom.

Table 6 reveals a statistically significant distinction in attitudes between male and female teachers, with female teachers exhibiting a more positive attitude towards dysgraphia management training programs. This finding is consistent with Taşdemir's (2014) study, highlighting the need to consider gender-related factors in designing training programs and addressing potential disparities in participation rates.

Tables 7 and 8 indicate no significant differences in attitudes based on the level of instruction or the type of school, suggesting a universal need for inclusive training initiatives. This emphasises the importance of implementing training programs that are accessible and beneficial to teachers across diverse settings.

Table 9 suggests that more experienced teachers tend to hold more positive attitudes towards dysgraphia management training. This finding is consistent with Stan, Stancovici, and Palos's (2013) study, emphasising the importance of considering teachers' experience levels when designing training initiatives and recognising the value of continuous professional development throughout teachers' careers.

Conclusively, Table 10 indicates that professional qualification does not significantly impact teachers' attitudes towards dysgraphia management training programs. This suggests that regardless of their specific roles within the education system, teachers recognise the importance of ongoing training to effectively support students with dysgraphia.

### **Conclusion**

The study emphasises the importance of teacher engagement in dysgraphia management training, highlighting the need for comprehensive and inclusive training initiatives that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of teachers. The findings emphasise the significance of fostering a culture of continuous learning, promoting empathy, and advocating for holistic support for students with dysgraphia. Integrating counseling for value reorientation can play an important role in cultivating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment, ultimately contributing to the overall academic and emotional well-being of learners with dysgraphia. By implementing the outlined recommendations, educational institutions can effectively address the existing gaps in dysgraphia management training and promote a more inclusive and supportive educational ecosystem for all learners.

### **Implications for Counselling and Value Reorientation**

Counseling for value reorientation has significant implications for enhancing teacher engagement in dysgraphia management training. Firstly, it can cultivate empathy and understanding among teachers, helping them grasp the challenges faced by learners with dysgraphia. This understanding can foster a more compassionate and inclusive classroom environment. Secondly, counseling can encourage teachers to actively seek out dysgraphia management training programs, promoting a proactive approach to professional development. Thirdly, it can foster a culture of continuous learning, emphasizing the importance of staying updated with the latest research and practices in dysgraphia management. Fourthly, counseling can advocate for holistic support for students, emphasizing the need for comprehensive educational strategies that cater to their diverse needs. Finally, it can encourage positive attitudinal shifts among teachers, promoting an inclusive and empathetic approach that fosters an environment of understanding and acceptance for students with dysgraphia.

### **Recommendations**

1. Educational institutions should design and implement more intensive and specialised training programs focused on dysgraphia management to bridge the gap in teachers' knowledge and skills.
2. Efforts should be made by schools to accommodate diverse preferences by providing flexible

- training schedules that cater to teachers' availability and learning styles.
3. Education authorities should encourage more female participation by tailoring training programs to appeal to diverse gender perspectives and preferences.
  4. Acknowledging the positive correlation between teaching experience and attitudes towards dysgraphia management training, school authorities should support professional growth throughout teachers' careers.
  5. Schools should integrate counseling interventions aimed at fostering empathy, encouraging proactive engagement, and promoting positive attitudinal shifts among teachers. These efforts can aid in the development of a supportive and inclusive learning environment that prioritises the holistic well-being and academic success of students with dysgraphia.

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