

# Inclusion of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment in Secondary Schools: Challenges and Coping Strategies

Musa Moses Egaga<sup>1</sup>, Veronica Nakanda Effiom<sup>2</sup>, Anthony Godwin Bullem<sup>3</sup>, Egan Hilary Ejim<sup>4</sup>, Miebaka Nabiebu<sup>5</sup>, Godian Patrick Okenjom<sup>6,\*</sup>, Bernard Atrogor Oko<sup>7</sup>, Samuel Okpon Ekaette<sup>6</sup>, Maria Enemebe Ngwu<sup>8</sup>, Augustine Akpan<sup>9</sup>, Orogwu Alo Aloysius<sup>10</sup>, Mercy Egbai Egbai<sup>6</sup> and T.A. Omang<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Department of Continuing Education and Development Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>4</sup>Department of Social Studies and Civic Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>5</sup>Department of International Law and Jurisprudence, Faculty of Law, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>6</sup>Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>7</sup>Department of Curriculum and Teaching, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>8</sup>Department of Guidance and Counseling, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>9</sup>Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA), University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

<sup>10</sup>Department of Educational Management, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ebonyi, Nigeria

<sup>11</sup>Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

**Abstract:** *Background:* The challenges of managing students with borderline cognitive impairment in an inclusive classroom are enormous. Therefore, there is a need for appropriate coping strategies to foster the successful inclusion of students with borderline cognitive impairment in the day-to-day classroom activities.

*Aim:* This study examines the challenges facing the inclusion of students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment (BCI) and the coping strategies often adopted by these students in the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

*Method:* The study adopted a descriptive survey design. One hundred and sixty-nine students with BCI in twenty (2) regular secondary schools were selected, using the purposive sampling technique. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled "Academic Challenges and Coping Mechanism of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment Questionnaire (ACCMSBCIQ 0.67).

*Results:* The study revealed that inclusive education for students with BCI at the secondary school level in the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State is hindered by a complex web of interconnected challenges. The study also revealed that students with BCI adopt several coping strategies to remain included in the secondary education program in the study area.

*Recommendation:* Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that the government and other stakeholders should organize adequate training on the inclusion of students with BCI for all secondary school teachers in Cross River State

**Keywords:** Inclusion, students, borderline cognitive impairment, secondary schools, challenges, coping strategies.

## INTRODUCTION

Students with borderline cognitive impairment (BCI), also often referred to as borderline intellectual functioning (BIF), or "slow learners," represent a significant and frequently misunderstood population in

educational settings. Though they did not meet the diagnostic criteria for intellectual disability, their cognitive abilities fall noticeably below the average range. This creates a unique set of educational challenges for them [1, 2]. This group is typically defined by an intelligence quotient (IQ) score in the range of 71 to 84 [1]. This position at the intersection of average functioning and intellectual disability means they often go underdiagnosed and lack access to the specialized support services available to their peers with more severe cognitive impairments [2].

\*Address correspondence to this author at the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria; Tel: +234 706 861 8522; E-mail: okenjomsworld@gmail.com; okenjom.godian@unical.edu.ng

Understanding their specific characteristics, learning patterns, and challenges is crucial for developing effective educational strategies.

Students with BCI are a heterogeneous group; their profiles can vary significantly, but they share several common characteristics that distinguish them from their typically developing peers [3]. These characteristics span through cognitive, social, and emotional domains. Although their overall IQ is in the borderline range, their performance on specific cognitive subtests may be uneven. They often demonstrate particular weaknesses in areas such as processing speed, working memory, and executive functions, while other cognitive domains may be relatively stronger [3].

The key characteristic of BCI is not just a lower IQ, but also limitations in adaptive functioning. This refers to a person's ability to manage daily life tasks and social responsibilities [1]. Students with BCI may struggle with social skills, communication, problem-solving, and self-direction [4].

Students with BCI are at a higher risk of social exclusion, bullying, and low self-esteem [5]. They may have difficulty understanding complex social cues, which can hinder their ability to form and maintain friendships. Furthermore, they are more prone to emotional problems, such as anxiety and depression, partly due to a limited capacity for emotional awareness and a sense of chronic academic failure [3, 6]. The learning characteristics of students with BCI are directly influenced by their cognitive profile. They are often described as "slow learners" because they require more time and repetition to master new concepts compared to their peers [7].

Key learning characteristics include reliance on concrete learning, struggling with abstract concepts, and limited working memory capacity. They often learn most effectively when presented with concrete, hands-on examples and visual aids. They usually struggle with abstract concepts, such as algebra, metaphors, and complex theoretical ideas, and have difficulty generalizing a skill learned in one context to a new or different situation [7]. Another core feature of BCI is a limited working memory capacity [3]. Students with borderline cognitive disabilities often struggle to hold and manipulate multiple pieces of information simultaneously, a critical skill for tasks such as following multi-step directions, performing mental arithmetic, and reading comprehension. Students with BCI often demonstrate slower cognitive processing

speed, which affects how quickly they can take in, process, and respond to information [4]. This group of students also struggles with organizing new information and connecting it to existing knowledge, often relying on rote memorization rather than deeper, more conceptual understanding [7]. The interplay of their cognitive and learning characteristics creates significant challenges for students with BCI, particularly within the fast-paced and demanding environment of mainstream secondary schools.

The global push for inclusive education has transformed educational policies and practices, advocating for the full participation of all students, including those with diverse learning needs, within mainstream school settings [8, 9]. A critical, yet often overlooked, group within this inclusive framework is students with borderline cognitive impairment (BCI). Characterized by an IQ score typically ranging between 71 and 84, BCI represents a gray area between intellectual disability and average cognitive functioning [1]. While these students do not qualify for the specialized support systems designed for intellectual disability, they nonetheless face significant academic and social challenges that hinder their ability to thrive in a conventional secondary school environment [4]. The effective inclusion of students with BCI is therefore a complex endeavor, fraught with specific challenges that necessitate the development and implementation of effective coping strategies.

Borderline Cognitive Impairment (BCI), Borderline Intellectual Functioning (BIF), and Mild Intellectual Difficulties (MID) are often used interchangeably because people within these groups are studied as a single group with the same or similar characteristics. Both refer to cognitive impairment that falls on the border between normal functioning and intellectual disability, and may experience difficulties with academic and social skills [10]. This study treated all students with BIF and MID as students with BCI. The challenges associated with including students with BCI in secondary schools are multifaceted, impacting their academic performance, social integration, and overall well-being. Academically, these students often struggle with abstract reasoning, problem-solving, and complex subjects such as mathematics and science, leading to underachievement and low grades [4, 5]. Their cognitive processing speed may be slower, and they may require more time and repetition to grasp new concepts, placing them at a disadvantage in fast-paced classroom settings [3]. This constitutes the DSM-5 and ICD-11 consideration of such students as vulnerable groups due to their low intellectual functioning [11].

Socially, students with borderline cognitive impairment suffer deficits in daily life adaptive functioning, just like people with Intellectual Disability. This group can be susceptible to unintentionally offending or making decisions without considering the consequences of such behaviors [12]. This group of students may face difficulties in interpreting social cues, engaging in peer relationships, and managing conflict, which can lead to social isolation, bullying, and low self-esteem [5]. These challenges are compounded by a lack of appropriate teacher training and a rigid curriculum that is not adapted to their unique learning styles, further marginalizing them within the school system [3].

To address these significant hurdles, a range of coping strategies is essential for fostering the successful inclusion of students with BCI. These strategies must be employed at multiple levels, involving school administration, teachers, peers, and the students themselves. For educators, a key strategy is the implementation of differentiated instruction, which involves modifying teaching methods, materials, and assessments to meet individual learning needs [8]. This can include providing visual aids, breaking down complex tasks into smaller steps, and offering extended time for assignments and examinations [5]. Furthermore, peer support and collaborative learning strategies are effective, as they promote social interaction and provide a supportive environment for academic growth [9]. At an institutional level, schools can benefit from providing professional development for teachers on how to identify and support students with BCI, thereby enhancing their pedagogical skills and fostering a more inclusive school culture [4]. Finally, students themselves can be taught self-advocacy skills and metacognitive strategies to help them recognize their strengths, understand their learning needs, and actively participate in their own educational journey [3]. This paper aims to synthesize the current literature on the challenges and coping strategies associated with the inclusion of students with borderline cognitive impairment in secondary schools, providing a comprehensive overview that can inform future research, policy development, and educational practice.

### Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to;

1. find out the major challenges faced by students with borderline cognitive impairment in

secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State

2. determine the coping strategies employed by students with borderline cognitive impairment in secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State

### Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study.

1. What are the significant challenges faced by students with borderline cognitive impairment in secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State?
2. What are the coping strategies employed by students with borderline cognitive impairment in secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Design Setting

The research design adopted is the descriptive survey design. The design aimed to determine the Inclusion of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment in Secondary Schools, the challenges they face, and the coping strategies required to enable them to cope with learning despite their Cognitive Impairment.

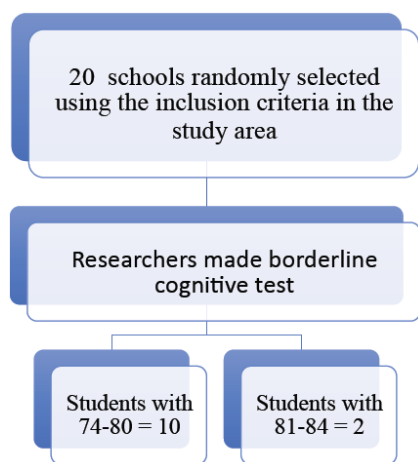
### Study Participants

The study participants consisted of all 169 students with BCI selected from 20 secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State (Ogoja Education Zone is made up of Bewkara, Obudu, Obanliku, Ogoja, and Yala Local Government Areas in Cross River State. Twenty secondary schools were randomly selected from one hundred and eighty-six (186) secondary schools in the Education zone.

### Sampling Technique

Multiple sampling techniques were used in the study. In the first stage of sampling, a random sampling technique was used to select twenty (20) schools out of the fifty-one (51) mixed secondary schools that met the criteria in the Ogoja education zone. The requirements were: The school must be government-owned and have trained special education teachers.

Names of the schools were written on a piece of paper, folded, and put in a basket for all the schools. The researcher therefore picked the number of documents according to the number of schools in each location to make the total number of sampled schools twenty (20) for the study. Special education teachers were used to identify students whose performance is below the standard mean, making them eligible to receive special education intervention and participate in the study. The next stage involved researchers administering a borderline cognitive test [13] to the students. The scores obtained from the test were then compared with the students' terminal scores over two years [10]. The last stage involved screening the students, selecting those with scores ranging from 70 to 84, which were consistent with their terminal results, and using them for the study. The sampling process is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** The Sample for the Study.

### **Instrument**

The instrument used for data collection in this study was a researcher-designed questionnaire tagged "Academic Challenges and Coping Mechanism of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment Questionnaire (ACCMSBCIQ). The questionnaire contained thirty (30) actual items that respondents answered. Each question required the respondents to indicate the frequency of their agreement. It ranges from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The content and construct validity of the Academic Challenges and Coping Mechanism of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment Questionnaire (ACCMSBCIQ) were established through expert input from Special Education and Educational Psychology faculty at the University of Calabar's Faculty of Education. The ACCMSBCIQ was given to three

experts: two from the Special Education and one from the Educational Psychology Units, University of Jos. The experts reviewed the ACCMSBCIQ items, making necessary corrections for appropriateness and stability. Items unrelated to the study or poorly constructed were deleted or modified, while new items were added to enhance face and content validity. Also, the Construct Validity was determined using factor analysis. This was done to reduce many individual items into several dimensions or to verify scale construction. The construct validity was obtained through a pilot study, and the scores were subjected to factor analysis.

The reliability of the ACCMSBCIQ was estimated using the Cronbach's Alpha method to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument for the study. The ACCMSBCIQ was administered to a sample of students who were not part of the main study, and the data obtained were used to estimate the reliability coefficient of ACCMSBCIQ. A reliability coefficient of 0.67 and above was considered adequate for the study.

### **Method of Data Collection**

- Questionnaires were distributed in person with the support of special education teachers in the selected schools.
- Students were observed with minimal disruption to class activities while learning.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The study used mean scores and order ranking as statistical tools for data analysis.

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

The researchers obtained ethical approval for this study from the Research Committee of the Department of Special Education, University of Calabar (Department of Special Educationethical Responsibility Committee - Ref: UC/SPE/Vol. 5./No. 8/019). Necessary ethical factors were considered in this study. The participants in this study were duly informed about the study, and consent to participate was obtained from their parents. All participants were informed of their right to participate in the study voluntarily and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. Participants were assured that their personal information would not be disclosed to third parties, as all collected data was intended solely for research purposes.

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** What are the significant challenges faced by students with borderline cognitive impairment in secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State?

Table 1 presents, in rank order, the magnitude of challenges faced by students with physical disabilities in secondary schools within the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. The analysis showed that item 3 ("inability to access modern technologies") ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with a mean score of 3.73. Item 2, "inappropriate teaching methods," ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with a mean score of 3.64. Item 9, "non-availability of special curriculum," ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> with a mean score of 3.61, item 12 (barriers in the environment) ranked 4<sup>th</sup>, and the last items with mean scores of 2.32 and 2.43 ranked 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, respectively. Thirteen of the 15 items (70.0%) have mean scores above 2.50, the cut-off point for determining the level of the challenges. Hence, 70.0% of the obstacles were major ones, while the remaining two were minor ones (Items 1 and 7). The analysis indicated that a large proportion of the challenges facing students with physical disabilities are significant challenges.

**Research Question 2:** What are the coping strategies employed by students with borderline cognitive impairment in secondary schools?

Table 2 shows, in rank order of magnitude, the preferred coping strategies employed by students with borderline cognitive impairment in secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State. The analysis revealed that item 8, "learning to do my daily activities myself", ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with a mean score of 3.80. Item 13 "Listening to inspirational talk/music" with a mean score of 3.78 ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, item 4 "requesting assistance from friends" with a mean score of 3.77 ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, while item 1 "working hard to solve my problems" ranked 4<sup>th</sup> with a mean score of 3.70. The results revealed that 15 items have (100.0%) mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50. Hence, the whole items were highly preferred coping mechanisms among the students.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Challenges Facing Inclusion of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment in Secondary Schools in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria

The study revealed that secondary school students with borderline cognitive impairment in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State, face several challenges. The challenges presented reveal that it is not a singular issue but a complex web of interconnected problems. These challenges, spanning from individual-level psychological to systemic inadequacies and social barriers, are widely corroborated in recent literature. A study by Adeleke,

**Table 1: Rank Order on Challenges of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment in Secondary Schools in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State**

Item No	Challenges of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment	Mean	Rank
1	Inability to access modern technologies	3.73	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Inappropriate teaching methods	3.64	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	Non-availability of special curriculum	3.61	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Barriers in the environment	3.57	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	Inability to move from one place to other at a good pace	3.56	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Non-specialist teachers in the subject matters	3.56	5 <sup>th</sup>
7	No resource room for improved learning	3.42	7 <sup>th</sup>
8	Inadequate facilities for learning in the regular schools	3.19	8 <sup>th</sup>
9	Inappropriate learning facilities	3.13	9 <sup>th</sup>
10	Inability to access financial support from the government	3.11	10 <sup>th</sup>
11	Difficulty in getting admission into a higher institution	2.64	11 <sup>th</sup>
12	Feeling inferior in the class	2.54	12 <sup>th</sup>
13	Lack of the school authority's support	2.32	13 <sup>th</sup>
14	Teachers are doubting my abilities	2.32	14 <sup>th</sup>
15	Unfriendly attitude of the student	2.43	15 <sup>th</sup>

**Table 2: Rank Order on Coping Mechanism Employed by Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment in Secondary Schools in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State**

Item No	Coping Mechanism Employed by Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment	Mean score	Rank
1	learning to do my daily activities myself	3.80	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	listening to inspirational talk/music on tape	3.78	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	requesting for assistance from friends	3.77	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	working hard to solve my problems	3.70	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	talking to myself that I am not alone in my condition	3.68	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Praying to God for help	3.53	6 <sup>th</sup>
7	Ignoring the negative attitude towards me	3.41	7 <sup>th</sup>
8	Aspiring to be independent in my studies	3.38	8 <sup>th</sup>
9	Adjusting to the facilities available for my studies	3.35	9 <sup>th</sup>
10	listening/reading the word of God	3.33	10 <sup>th</sup>
11	Interacting with others freely	3.33	10 <sup>th</sup>
12	Hoping that my situation could be better	3.31	12 <sup>th</sup>
13	Planning my schoolwork and following it up	3.13	13 <sup>th</sup>
14	Avoid thinking about my situation	2.94	14 <sup>th</sup>
15	Relying on family for support	2.90	15 <sup>th</sup>

[14] on challenges facing education of persons with intellectual disability in Ogoja Education Zone, Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria, has enumerated specific bottlenecks to effective education of individuals with intellectual disability, which include lack of adequate personnel, shortage of resource materials, negative societal attitude, lack of schools to accommodate these individuals with intellectual disability, among others.

The findings of this study revealed that the lack of modern technologies and appropriate learning facilities is a major systemic failure. The result corroborates the finding by Okokon and Okon [17] in a study that identifies a lack of resources and poor teaching and learning conditions as significant challenges to inclusion in Cross State. The lack of suitable facilities and technology directly affects the learning process, making it challenging for students with BCI to engage with the curriculum in a manner that meets their needs [16].

The study's findings also indicated that non-specialist teachers used inappropriate teaching methods. Teachers are the driving force for successful inclusion, but without proper training, they cannot effectively cater to the needs of students with disabilities [17-19]. The finding is in line with Ekanem *et al.* [20], who confirm that many teachers in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State, lack the knowledge

and skills for differential diagnosis and instructional adaptation for students with learning difficulties. Balami, Ibrahim, and Kabiru [14] emphasize that regular teachers are often challenged by their lack of knowledge on how to adapt the standard curriculum to suit the needs of students with mild intellectual disability, a group that includes BCI.

Another major challenge in the inclusion of secondary school students with BCI in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State, as identified in this study, is the lack of a "ready-made curriculum" for students with BCI. This was noted by Balami, Ibrahim, and Kabiru [16]. While some studies suggest curriculum adaptation as a solution, the literature indicates that regular teachers lack the skills to implement this effectively. Curriculum adaptation involves modifying the way content is presented and the number of items a student is expected to learn, as well as adapting instructional materials to suit individual needs [16].

According to the findings of this study, the environmental barrier is a significant physical obstacle in the inclusion of students with BCI in the Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State. This is a common problem in schools across Nigeria, including secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State, which are often not built with the needs of students with disabilities in mind [21]. The inability of students with BCI to move at a good pace may also be linked to co-

morbid conditions. The study also highlighted the absence of a dedicated resource room and inadequate facilities, both of which are essential for fostering a supportive learning environment. Resource rooms, when available, are designed to offer individualized or small-group instruction, which is necessary for students with BCI to reinforce concepts and develop specific skills. The absence of such facilities forces these students to learn in an environment that is not tailored to their needs.

The study revealed a lack of financial support for the education of secondary school students with BCI in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State. Research has established that Nigeria highlights that the transition from secondary school to tertiary education is "secondary school education for students with disabilities is fraught with problems, primarily associated with financial barriers, as the key obstacles. This inadequacy of facilities, from a lack of proper classrooms to a shortage of learning aids, is a direct consequence of insufficient funding, a key finding of research by Okokon and Okon [15]. The burden of training these children often falls on parents, many of whom are poor, and the lack of government financial support exacerbates this problem. The psychological impacts are profound. The feeling of inferiority (point 12) is a direct result of being in an unsupportive and ill-equipped environment.

The finding also indicated a lack of support from school authorities and the doubting attitude of teachers as significant barriers to inclusion of students with BCI in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State. Studies have established a negative attitude of personnel towards children with intellectual disability. The unfriendly attitude of students (point 15) is also a persistent problem. A study on the attitudes towards students with disabilities in Lagos, while showing some positive attitudes, also reveals that attitudes towards students with disabilities pose a serious challenge to education inclusion with disabilities [17]. These attitudes lead to social exclusion, which is a significant concern for students with BCI who already struggle with social interaction.

The findings discussed here reveal that the challenges to the inclusion of students with borderline cognitive impairment in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State, are systemic, professional, and personal. They are not isolated problems but rather interconnected issues that reinforce one another. From the lack of government funding and political will, which

leads to inadequate facilities and non-specialist teachers, to the attitudinal barriers among school staff and peers, the path to true inclusion is complex. The literature consistently demonstrates that without a concerted effort to address these multifaceted challenges, the goal of providing a truly inclusive and equitable education for all students in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State, will remain an unfulfilled aspiration.

### **Coping Strategies Used by Secondary School Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State**

Recognizing the unique needs and strengths of individuals with BCI and BIF enables the provision of tailored supports, including personalized learning plans, adaptive teaching methods, social skill training, accommodations, and assistive technology, all delivered by teachers as a form of intervention.

The findings of this study provide a critical look into the personal coping strategies employed by secondary school students with borderline cognitive impairment (BCI) in Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State. These strategies, which range from self-reliance to seeking social and spiritual support, highlight the resilience of these students in an often-unsupportive educational environment. The literature published supports and further illuminates the significance of these findings.

The most frequently reported coping strategies, according to this study, are learning to do daily activities on one's own and working hard to solve one's own problems, which align with a focus on self-reliance. This is a common and effective approach for individuals navigating personal challenges. The finding is in line with Ekanem and Akpabio [20], who found that fostering independence and practical skills is key for students with BCI, as it builds self-esteem and prepares them for future challenges. The ability to plan schoolwork and follow it up also falls into this category, showing a proactive approach to managing academic demands. While the study indicates students are doing this on their own, the literature suggests that with proper support from teachers, this could be more effective. A survey by Okokon and Essien [15] emphasizes the importance of direct instruction and task analysis as teaching methods to help students with BCI break down complex tasks into manageable steps, which directly supports their ability to become independent problem-solvers.

The finding revealed that students with BCI also rely on social and emotional coping mechanisms. Strategies such as seeking help from friends, interacting freely with others, and ignoring negative attitudes are vital. This aligns with a study by Luo *et al.* [22], which found that strong peer relationships and social support networks are protective factors against the adverse effects of social stigma for students with learning disabilities. The finding that students often talk to themselves about not being alone in their condition shows an internal process of self-reassurance, a cognitive coping strategy usually seen in individuals facing personal adversity. Relying on family for support is another crucial element, as many studies, including one by Alikor and Omede [23], show that family support is a cornerstone of resilience for students with disabilities in Nigeria.

The findings also highlight the role of spirituality and inspiration in coping. Strategies such as praying to God, listening/reading the word of God, and listening to inspirational talk/music are commonly used. In many Nigerian communities, faith is a primary source of comfort and strength during difficult times. The use of inspirational talks and music points to a more modern approach to seeking motivation and hope. The strategies of hoping for a better situation and aspiring to independence demonstrate that students with BCI maintain an optimistic outlook and a drive for a better future, which are powerful motivators. This is supported by Alikor and Omede [23] in a study on resilience among individuals with disabilities in West Africa, which noted the firm reliance on faith-based coping mechanisms.

The result also revealed a strategy involving the avoidance of thinking about one's own situation as a form of behavioral avoidance. While this might seem counterproductive, psychological literature suggests that short-term avoidance can be a valid coping mechanism to manage overwhelming stress. However, as noted by researchers like Orji and Abah [24], Egan [6], relying too heavily on this can prevent a student from seeking necessary help or facing their challenges directly. It underscores the need for counseling and support services that help students process their feelings more healthily.

The finding also indicated that students are adjusting to the facilities available for their studies. This shows a passive coping strategy where students are forced to adapt to a non-inclusive environment rather than having the environment adapt to them. This

adjustment, while a form of resilience, also points to the systemic failure to provide an accessible and supportive learning environment, placing the burden of adaptation squarely on the student. This study provides a detailed picture of the multifaceted coping strategies used by students with BCI. Their ability to draw on internal motivation, social networks, and faith is remarkable. However, these findings also reveal that students are often left to cope on their own, highlighting the urgent need for a more comprehensive, systematic, and supportive approach from schools and the government.

Understanding the unique abilities and challenges is crucial for accurate diagnosis, and providing tailored support is a key intervention strategy [25]. This approach enables individual with BCI to receive targeted help and address their specific needs, and promote optimal development and functioning.

## CONCLUSION

The findings from the study revealed that inclusion of students with borderline cognitive impairment in secondary schools in Ogoja education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria, is faced with many challenges. Due to their limited mental capacity, mainstreaming them into the regular school system has proven challenging. However, the study revealed that these students also employ several strategies to copy in mainstream secondary schools within the Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that;

1. The government and school authorities should increase efforts to engage well-trained special education teachers who can effectively teach students with BCI and other related intellectual disabilities. Additionally, the host community can collaborate with the government to provide the necessary resource materials for effective teaching and learning in secondary schools within the Ogoja Education Zone, Cross River State.
2. Parents and teachers of students with BCI should train the students on social skills to help in coping with symptomatic challenges associated with BCI.



## CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors agreed to all terms, conditions, and procedures. Hence, there is no conflict of interest concerning the article.

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the study was conducted. Egaga Musa Moses initiated the idea that led to this work. Oko Bernard Atrogor and Hilary Ejim Egan wrote the design for the study. Effiom Veronica Nakanda, Okenjom Godian Patrick, and Miebaka Nabiebu collected the data used for analysis. Ekaette Samuel Okpon, Augustine Akpan, Ngwu Maria Enemebe, Aloysius, Orogwu Alo, Egbai, Mercy Egbai and Omang, T. A. edited the work and the type setting.

## QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUMENT

**Title: Academic Challenges and Coping Mechanism of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment Questionnaire (ACCMSBCIQ)**

### Section A: Biography

**Instructions:** Tick (✓) in the space provided for the behaviour that applies to you, tick one option only.

1. Sex (a) Male ( ) (b) Female ( )
2. Age (a) 10- 12 years ( ) (b) 13-15 years ( ) (c) Above 15 years ( )
3. Family Structure: (a) Monogamous ( ) (b) Polygamous ( ) (c) Divorce ( )
4. School types (a) Day ( ) (b) Boarding ( )
5. Class: Upper basic 1 ( ) Upper basic 2 ( ) Upper basic 3

### SECTION B: INSTRUMENT ITEMS

**NO 1: Challenges of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment in Secondary Schools in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State**

Item No	Challenges of Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment	Mean	Rank
1	Inability to access modern technologies		
2	Inappropriate teaching methods		
3	Non-availability of special curriculum		
4	Barriers in the environment		
5	Inability to move from one place to another at a good pace		
6	Non-specialist teachers in the subject matters		
7	No resource room for improved learning		
8	Inadequate facilities for learning in the regular schools		
9	Inappropriate learning facilities		
10	Inability to access financial support from the government		
11	Difficulty in getting admission into a higher institution		
12	Feeling inferior in the class		
13	Lack of the school authority's support		
14	Teachers are doubting my abilities		
15	Unfriendly attitude of the student		

**NO 2: Coping Mechanism Employed by Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment in Secondary Schools in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State**

Item No	Coping Mechanism Employed by Students with Borderline Cognitive Impairment	Mean score	Rank
1	learning to do my daily activities myself		
2	listening to inspirational talk/music on tape		
3	requesting assistance from friends		
4	working hard to solve my problems		
5	talking to myself that I am not alone in my condition		
6	Praying to God for help		
7	Ignoring the negative attitude towards me		
8	Aspiring to be independent in my studies		
9	Adjusting to the facilities available for my studies		
10	listening/reading the word of God		
11	Interacting with others freely		
12	Hoping that my situation could be better		
13	Planning my schoolwork and following it up		
14	Avoid thinking about my situation		
15	Relying on family for support		

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