

Inclusive Education Practices as Predictors of Equity in Access to Learning Opportunities among Preschoolers in Public Nursery Schools in the Onitsha Education Zone, Anambra State

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Abstract

This study examined inclusive education practices as predictors of equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in the Onitsha Education Zone, Anambra State. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised 1,016 nursery school teachers in 127 public nursery schools, while a sample of 240 teachers was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed 30-items questionnaire titled: Inclusive Education Practices and Equity in Access to Learning Opportunities Questionnaire (IEPEALQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Early Childhood Education and Measurement and Evaluation. A pilot test conducted with 20 teachers that were not involved in the study, yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78 using Cronbach Alpha. The researcher and the research assistants collected data from the teachers in each school through the administration of questionnaires. Data collected were analysed using simple linear regression. The findings revealed that teacher preparedness for inclusive education practices, classroom management practices, instructional adaptation, and attitudes of teachers towards inclusion positively and significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers. Recommendations were made based on the findings that differentiated instructional methods and effective classroom management practices are required to ensure that inclusive education practices are properly implemented by a prepared teacher to promote fairness in learning opportunities.

Keywords: Inclusive education practices, Equity in access to learning opportunities, Teacher, Preschoolers, and Nursery school.

Introduction

Inclusive education has emerged as a key global priority in ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or socio-economic status, have equal access to quality education. Rooted in the principles of equity, social justice, and human rights, inclusive education seeks to remove barriers that hinder participation and learning among diverse groups of learners. International frameworks such as the UNESCO Education for All agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasized the need for inclusive education and equitable quality education for all learners, particularly those who are vulnerable or marginalized. In the context of nursery school education stage, inclusive education practices extensively and

critically form the foundation for lifelong learning and development.

According to Kafia (2023), inclusive education practices refer to educational strategies and approaches that ensure all learners, regardless of ability, disability, or background, are actively supported to participate in learning within the same classroom environment through adapted teaching and equitable support systems. Kenny et al., (2023) defined inclusive education practices equally as coordinated teaching and learning strategies designed to remove barriers to participation and ensure that diverse learners are fully engaged in equitable educational experiences within mainstream school settings. Asres (2025) posited as well

that inclusive education practices are school-based instructional and administrative actions that promote access, participation, and achievement for all learners, especially children with special educational needs, within a supportive learning environment. Public nursery schools are expected to accommodate children with diverse needs, including those with disabilities, learning difficulties, and varying cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Inclusive education practices in this setting may involve differentiated instruction, use of appropriate teaching materials, teacher preparedness, and supportive classroom environments that foster participation equally for every child. At the apex of the inclusive education practices is a teacher.

Teacher is a person who helps others gain knowledge, skills, or values. She is a person who instructs, guides, and supports students in understanding a subject or developing abilities. According to Asogwa et al. (2023), a teacher is viewed as a professional who possesses the knowledge and skills to design instruction, support diverse learners, and facilitate learning using appropriate strategies and technologies. Taylor and Thion (2023) posited that a teacher is defined in terms of effectiveness as an individual whose role is to influence and improve students' learning outcomes through instructional input and professional practice. Similarly, a teacher or educator is described as a professional who applies pedagogical knowledge, instructional skills, and reflective practices to support student learning and development (Hughes et al., 2023). The teachers are generally regarded

as custodians of equity in access to learning opportunities for all learners.

On the other hand, equity in access to learning opportunities refers to the fairness in the provision of educational resources, experiences, and support systems that enable all children to learn effectively. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) defined equity in education as ensuring that all learners, regardless of background or personal circumstances, have fair opportunities to access quality learning resources and achieve their potential, without social or economic barriers limiting their participation. Also, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2023) explained equity in access to learning opportunities as the provision of fair and inclusive educational conditions where every learner is supported according to need, so that differences in background, ability, or location do not limit educational participation or success. Similarly, Teo and Nasri (2019) defined equity in education as fair treatment and equal opportunity for every learner to access educational experiences and resources needed for academic success, regardless of individual differences or disadvantages. It goes beyond mere access to schooling and focuses on ensuring that every preschooler has the opportunity to achieve their full potential without discrimination or exclusion.

Preschoolers are children aged 3 to 5 years old, a critical developmental stage focused on play-based learning, and social skill development. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2021) viewed preschoolers as

children in the early childhood stage, typically between ages 3 and 5, who are transitioning from home-based care to formal early learning settings such as nursery or kindergarten programmes. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), preschoolers are young children in the developmental stage before primary school entry, usually between ages 3 and 5 years, characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional growth. They are children between early childhood ages who develop language, social, and cognitive skills through structured play and interaction in early education environments (Berk, 2018). Preschoolers receive knowledge in an educational setting called nursery school. Bredekamp (2017) defined nursery school as an educational setting that provides developmentally appropriate experiences that promote children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development through play-based learning. It was viewed as an organized early learning environment where young children are guided to develop foundational skills through exploration, interaction, and structured activities (Seefeldt, 2019). Kostelnik, et al., (2019) as well asserted that nursery school is an early childhood educational programme that emphasizes play-based instruction, social development, and foundational academic readiness for young learners aged 3–5 years.

In the Onitsha Education Zone, public nursery schools face challenges in fully implementing inclusive education practices. While policies supporting inclusion may exist, the extent to which these practices predict

equitable access to learning opportunities among preschoolers remains unclear. Some children may still experience exclusion, limited participation, or unequal access to instructional materials and support services. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the inclusive education practices as predictors of equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in the Onitsha Education Zone, Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing emphasis on inclusive education practices as a means of promoting equity and equal learning opportunities for all children, its effective implementation in public nursery schools remain a significant concern. Inclusive education is intended to ensure that every child, regardless of ability, and socio-economic status, has access to meaningful and supportive learning experiences. However, in many developing regions, including Nigeria, there is evidence that disparities in access to learning opportunities still persist among young learners. In the Onitsha Education Zone, public nursery schools are expected to implement inclusive education practices that accommodate children with diverse needs, including those with disabilities, learning difficulties, and varying cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, observations and preliminary reports suggest that many of these schools face challenges such as inadequate instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, insufficiently trained teachers, and limited support services. These challenges may hinder

the proper implementation of inclusive education practices and, consequently, affect the level of equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

Furthermore, some preschoolers in nursery schools may still experience exclusion, marginalization, or unequal participation in classroom activities due to factors such as disability, gender, language barriers, or socio-economic conditions. This raises concerns about whether the inclusive education practices currently in place are sufficient to ensure fairness and equal opportunities for all learners. Although several policies and frameworks advocate for inclusive education practices, there is a lack of sufficient empirical evidence on how these practices predict equity in access to learning opportunities at the early childhood level, particularly within the Onitsha Education Zone. This gap in knowledge makes it difficult for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to design effective strategies for improving inclusive practices in nursery schools. Therefore, the problem of this study is to determine the extent to which inclusive education practices predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in the Onitsha Education Zone.

Literature Review

Teacher preparedness for inclusive education might predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschooler. Sepadi (2025) investigated teachers' understanding and readiness for inclusive education in rural schools. It was found that

many teachers had limited preparedness due to inadequate training and lack of professional development, which negatively affected the effective implementation of inclusive practices. As a result, learners with diverse needs experienced unequal participation and reduced access to learning opportunities. The study concluded that improving teacher preparedness through targeted training enhances inclusive classroom practices and promotes educational equity. In the same vein, Alnajjar and Alnoaim (2025) revealed that teachers who perceived themselves as well-trained and competent in inclusive instructional strategies were more effective in supporting diverse learners. Such preparedness significantly improved student participation, engagement, and access to learning opportunities in inclusive settings. Besides, Florian and Camedda (2020) explored teacher education programmes for inclusive classrooms across European schools. It was found that teachers who received specialized training in inclusive education demonstrated higher competence in adapting instruction to diverse learners, which significantly improved students' participation and equitable access to learning opportunities. The study emphasized that lack of preparedness leads to exclusionary classroom practices.

Furthermore, classroom management practices will likely predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschooler. Stevenson, et al. (2024) examined classroom management and equitable intervention practices in school settings. Findings showed that supportive and proactive classroom management strategies reduce exclusionary

discipline and promote equitable participation in learning, especially for diverse learners. Again, Putra and Yanto (2025) meta-analysis of classroom management studies revealed likewise that effective classroom management significantly improves student engagement and equal participation in learning activities, thereby supporting equity in classroom outcomes. Ahmed and Du Plessis (2024) too explored teachers' classroom management experiences and found that structured and positive management practices help create inclusive learning environments where all learners have access to instruction and support, reducing marginalization of low-performing students. Rahadian and Budiningsih (2023) equally found that classroom management based on student learning styles improves access to learning opportunities by tailoring instruction to individual needs, thereby promoting equity among learners.

Nevertheless, instructional adaptation practices might likely predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschooler. Lin, et al. (2026) in a study on inclusive pedagogy and instructional adaptation in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms, found that instructional adaptation improved engagement, achievement, and sense of belonging for all learners, including low-performing students, indicating improved equity in access. Similarly, Omariba (2025) study focused on inclusive practices in secondary schools and found that instructional adaptations such as differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) significantly enhance equitable access and learner outcomes. It emphasized that adapting

teaching to learners' needs reduces barriers and promotes participation for diverse groups. In the same context, Sepadi (2025) study on teachers' implementation of inclusive instructional strategies revealed that lack of instructional adaptation like undifferentiated teaching, limits equity in access. It concluded that flexible instruction, teacher training, and curriculum adaptation are essential for equitable learning opportunities. Correspondingly, Nzuza (2023) study showed that teachers, who adapt instruction through modifying curriculum, teaching methods, and materials, improve participation and access for marginalized learners. The researcher highlights instructional adaptation as a key driver of inclusive and equitable classroom practices. Also, Silverman (2024) findings show that these adaptations create equitable pathways for participation and success, especially for diverse learners.

Nonetheless, attitudes of teachers towards inclusion will likely predict equity in access to learning opportunities. Hence, Mejoy et al. (2024) found that teachers with positive attitudes toward inclusion were more likely to adopt inclusive classroom practices, which improved participation and learning opportunities for students with diverse needs. This implies that positive attitudes increase equitable access by reducing exclusion of learners with disabilities.

In agreement, Krainer et al. (2024) revealed that teachers' positive attitudes and self-efficacy significantly enhance their willingness to implement inclusive strategies, such as differentiated instruction and collaboration. As such, when teachers are

confident and positive, students receive more individualized support, improving equal learning opportunities. Again, Selisko, et al. (2024) showed that teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward inclusion shape their instructional decisions and openness to diverse learners. Hence, teachers with inclusive attitudes are more likely to create learning environments that support equal participation. In parallel, Zraydi et al. (2026) examined how teachers' attitudes influence their adoption of inclusive technologies for students with learning disabilities. It was found that positive attitudes significantly predict teachers' willingness to implement inclusive tools, which expands access to learning for diverse learners. When teachers are open to inclusion and innovation, students with learning difficulties gain more equal access to instructional resources and participation.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the inclusive education practices as predictors of equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in the Onitsha Education Zone, Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the predictive value of teacher preparedness for inclusive education practices on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.
2. assess the predictive value of classroom management practices on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

3. investigate the predictive value of instructional adaptation on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.
4. determine the predictive value of attitudes of teachers towards inclusion on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does teacher preparedness for inclusive education practices predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone?
2. How do classroom management practices predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone?
3. What is the predictive value of instructional adaptation on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone?
4. How do teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Teacher preparedness for inclusive education practices does not significantly

predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

2. Classroom management practices do not significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

3. Instructional adaptation does not significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

4. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education do not significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design, which is used to analyze the statistical relationship between two or more variables without manipulating them. It identifies patterns, trends, and the strength of associations, as they occur naturally. This method allows researchers to make predictions but cannot prove causation. In this study, the correlational research design is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to gather data on the predictive value of inclusive education practices on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in the Onitsha Education Zone. The study was carried out in Onitsha Education Zone in Anambra State, Nigeria. The Zone is one of the educational administrative divisions in Anambra State and

comprises both urban and semi-urban communities with a considerable number of public nursery and primary schools. The population of this study comprised 1016 nursery school teachers in 127 public nursery schools in the area (Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB, 2026).. The population is considered appropriate for the study because it consists of individuals who have first-hand experience with inclusive classroom practices and the challenges associated with providing equitable learning opportunities in early childhood education settings. The sample for this study consisted of 240 nursery school teachers from all the public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone, of Anambra State, Nigeria. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. This was because the population is spread across several schools within the education zone. In the first stage, cluster sampling was used to group public nursery schools according to their local government areas within the Onitsha Education Zone. This helps to ensure proper coverage of the entire study area. In the second stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select 30 proportionate numbers of public nursery schools from each cluster. This ensures that every school has an equal chance of being selected. In the third stage, simple random sampling was also used to select 8 teachers within the chosen schools, who are directly involved in classroom instruction and inclusive education practices.

The main instrument for data collection in this study was a research-developed questionnaire titled "Inclusive

Education Practices and Equity in Access to Learning Opportunities Questionnaire (IEPEALQ)". The instrument was divided into three main sections: Section A collected demographic information of the respondents such as gender, qualification, years of teaching experience, and school type. Section B contained Inclusive Education Practices Scale (IEPS) of 20 items. Section C contained Scale for Equity in Access to Learning Opportunities of 10 items. All the items in both sections A and B were structured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), to allow respondents express the degree of their agreement with each statement. The questionnaires for this study were subjected to face and content validation to ensure that they measure what they were intended to measure. The draft questionnaire was given to two experts in the field of Early Childhood Education, and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation, both in Nwafor Orizu College of education, Nsugbe for scrutiny. The experts assessed the instrument in terms of clarity and appropriateness of language, relevance of each item to the research objectives, and adequacy of coverage of the variables under study. Their corrections, suggestions, and recommendations were carefully considered and used to modify the instrument where necessary before usage. A pilot test of the instrument was conducted with 20 teachers that were not involved in the study and data obtained from the pilot test was analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained.

Data for this study were collected through the administration of questionnaires to nursery school teachers in the public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State. The data collected for this study were analyzed using simple linear regression statistical tool. If $F_{\text{calculated}} \geq F_{\text{critical}}$ ($p \geq 0.05$), reject the null hypothesis. But If $F_{\text{calculated}} < F_{\text{critical}}$ ($p < 0.05$), do not reject the null hypothesis.

Result and Discussion

Research Question 1: How does teacher preparedness for inclusive education practices predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone?

Table 1: Summary of simple regression analysis on how teacher preparedness for inclusive education practices predicts equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

		Unstandardized	Std. Error	Standardized
		B	B	β
Constant		-0.205	0.143	
Teacher Preparedness		1.049	0.039	0.867
R	0.867			
R ²	0.752			
Adj. R ²	0.751			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 1 indicated that teacher preparedness for inclusive education positively predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in the Onitsha Education Zone as shown by the regression coefficient ($R = 0.867$). The

coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.752 showed that the explanatory power of the variable was highly strong. This implies that 75% of the variations in equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in the Onitsha Education Zone were accounted for by the variations in teacher preparedness. The adjusted R^2 supported the claim of the R^2 with a value of 0.751, indicating that 75% of the total variation in the dependent variable (equity in access to learning opportunities among children) was explained by the independent variable (Teacher Preparedness). Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of teacher preparedness for inclusive education is highly strong in determining the equity in access to learning opportunities among children in the Zone. Moreover, the standardized beta ($\beta = 0.867$) showed that teacher preparedness is a positive predictor of equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers. Hence, teacher preparedness leads to 0.867(87%) increase in equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Research Question 2: How do classroom management practices predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone?

Table 2: Summary of simple regression analysis on how classroom management practices predicts equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

	Unstandardized	Std. Error	Standardized
	B	B	β

Constant		-0.206	0.069	
Classroom Management Practices		0.945	0.019	0.954
R	0.954			
R^2	0.911			
Adj. R^2	0.911			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 2 indicated that classroom management practices positively predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone as shown by the regression coefficient ($R = 0.954$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.911 showed that the explanatory power of the variable was highly strong. This implies that 91% of the variations in equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers were accounted for by the variations in classroom management practices. The adjusted R^2 supported the claim of the R^2 with a value of 0.911 indicating that 91% of the total variation in the dependent variable (equity in access to learning opportunities among children) was explained by the independent variable (classroom management practices). Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of classroom management practices is highly strong in determining the equity in access to learning opportunities among children in the zone. Moreover, the standardized beta ($\beta = 0.954$) showed that classroom management practices is a positive predictor of equity in access to learning opportunities among children. Hence, classroom management practices leads to 0.954(95%) increase in equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in

public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Research Question 3: What is the predictive value of instructional adaptation on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone?

Table 3: Summary of simple regression analysis on the predictive value of instructional adaptation on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

		Unstandardized	Std. Error	Standardized
		β	β	β
Constant		0.824	0.051	
Instructional adaptation		0.776	0.014	0.962
R	0.962			
R ²	0.925			
Adj. R ²	0.925			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 3 indicated that instructional adaptation positively predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone as shown by the regression coefficient ($R = 0.962$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.925 showed that the explanatory power of the variable was highly strong. This implies that 93% of the variations in equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers were accounted for by the variations in instructional adaptation. The adjusted R^2 supported the claim of the R^2 with a value of 0.925 indicating that 93% of the total variation in the dependent variable (equity in access to

learning opportunities among children) was explained by the independent variable (instructional adaptation). Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of instructional adaptation is highly strong in determining the equity in access to learning opportunities among children in the zone. In addition, the standardized beta ($\beta = 0.962$) showed that instructional adaptation is a positive predictor of equity in access to learning opportunities among children. As such, instructional adaptation leads to (0.962)96% increase in equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Research Question 4: How do teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone?

Table 4: Summary of simple regression analysis on how teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

		Unstandardized	Std. Error	Standardized
		B	β	β
Constant		1.210	0.117	
Attitudes of Teachers Towards Inclusion		0.674	0.033	0.801
R	0.801			
R ²	0.642			
Adj. R ²	0.641			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 4 indicated that attitudes of teachers towards inclusion positively predict

equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone as shown by the regression coefficient ($R = 0.801$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.642 showed that the explanatory power of the variable was highly strong. This implies that 64% of the variations in equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers were accounted for by the variations in attitudes of teachers towards inclusion. The adjusted R^2 supported the claim of the R^2 with a value of 0.641 indicating that 64% of the total variation in the dependent variable (equity in access to learning opportunities among children) was explained by the independent variable (attitudes of teachers towards inclusion). Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of attitudes of teachers towards inclusion is highly strong in determining the equity in access to learning opportunities among children in the zone. However, the standardized beta ($\beta = 0.801$) showed that attitudes of teachers towards inclusion is a positive predictor of equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers. As such, attitudes of teachers towards inclusion leads to 0.801(80%) increase in equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Teacher preparedness for inclusive education practices does not significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in

public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Table 5: Simple regression analysis test of significance on the predictive value of teacher preparedness for inclusive education practices on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

		Unstand ardized	Std. Error	Standar dized	t-	P-
		β	β	B	Value	Value
Constant		-0.205	0.143		-1.436	0.152
Teacher Preparedness		1.049	0.039	0.867	26.838	0.000
R	0.867					
R^2	0.752					
Adj. R^2	0.751					
F	720.265					.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 5 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) is 0.867, while the R^2 is 0.752, and Adjust R^2 is 0.751. The F-ratio associated with regression is 720.265, the t-value is 26.838 and the p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that teacher preparedness for inclusive education has no significant influence on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers and accepted the alternative hypothesis that teacher preparedness for inclusive education significantly predicts equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Hypothesis 2: Classroom management practices do not significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Table 6: Test of significance of simple regression analysis with classroom management practices as it predicts equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

		Unstand ardized	Std. Erro r	Standar dized	t-	P-
		β	B	β	Val e	Valu e
Constant		0.206	0.069		2.969	0.003
Classroom Management Practices		.945	0.019	0.954	49.328	0.000
R	0.954					
R ²	0.911					
Adj. R ²	0.911					
F	2433.294					0.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 6 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) is 0.954, while the R² is 0.911, and Adjust R² is 0.911. The F-ratio associated with regression is 2433.294, the t-value is 49.328 and the p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that classroom management practices have no significant influence on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers and accepted the alternative hypothesis that classroom management practices significantly predict equity in access to learning

opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Hypothesis 3: Instructional adaptation does not significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Table 7: Test of significance of simple regression analysis with instructional adaptation as it predicts equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

		Unstandar dized	Std . Err or	Standar dized	t-	P-
		β	β	β	Val ue	Val ue
Constant		0.824	0.051		16.218	0.000
Instructional Adaptation		0.776	0.014	0.962	54.264	0.000
R	0.962					
R ²	0.925					
Adj. R ²	0.925					
F	2944.618					0.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 7 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) is 0.962, while the R² is 0.925, and Adjust R² is 0.925. The F-ratio associated with regression is 2944.618, the t-value is 54.264 and the p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that instructional adaptation has no significant influence on equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers and accepted the alternative hypothesis that instructional

adaptation significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Hypothesis 4: Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education do not significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Table 8: Test of significance of simple regression analysis with teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education as it predicts equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

		Unstand ardized	Std. Error	Standa rdized	t-	P-
		β		β	Val ue	Val ue
Constant		1.210	0.117		10.360	0.000
Attitudes of Teachers Towards Inclusion		0.674	0.033	0.801	20.671	0.000
R	0.801					
R ²	0.642					
Adj. R ²	0.641					
F	427.296					0.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 8 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) is 0.801, while the R² is 0.642, and Adjust R² is 0.641. The F-ratio associated with regression is 427.296, the t-value is 20.671 and the p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education have no significant

influence on equity in access to learning opportunities among children and accepted the alternative hypothesis that teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Discussion of the Findings

Finding of the study revealed that teacher preparedness for inclusive education positively predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in the Onitsha Education Zone. The study also showed that teacher preparedness for inclusive education significantly predicts equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers. This is as a result of the respondents accepting the fact that teachers: have adequate training to teach children with diverse learning needs; feel confident in handling children with special educational needs in the class; understand the principles of inclusive education; are aware of strategies for supporting diverse learners; and also modify my teaching to meet individual learners' needs. This is supported by the findings of Sepadi (2025) that many teachers had limited preparedness due to inadequate training and lack of professional development, which negatively affected the effective implementation of inclusive practices. As a result, learners with diverse needs experienced unequal participation and reduced access to learning opportunities. Again, Florian and Camedda (2020) posited that teachers who received specialized training in inclusive education demonstrated higher competence in adapting instruction to diverse learners, which

significantly improved students' participation and equitable access to learning opportunities. Findings of the study revealed that classroom management practices positively predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone. The study also showed that that classroom management practices significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers. This is as a result of the respondents accepting the fact that teachers: manage their classroom in a way that includes all learners equally; encourage cooperative learning among children of different abilities; ensure that no child is left out during classroom activities; maintain discipline without discriminating against any learner; and also promote positive interaction among all children in class. The finding of the study is in line with the findings of McDaniel and Hirsch (2024) who asserted that supportive and proactive classroom management strategies reduce exclusionary discipline and promote equitable participation in learning, especially for diverse learners. Similarly, Putra and Yanto (2025) found that effective classroom management significantly improves student engagement and equal participation in learning activities, thereby supporting equity in classroom outcomes.

Finding of the study revealed that instructional adaptation positively predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone. The study also showed that instructional adaptation significantly predicts equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers.

This is as a result of the respondents accepting the fact that teachers: use different teaching methods to accommodate all learners; simplify instructional content for children who have difficulty learning; provide additional support to slow learners; use teaching aids to enhance understanding for all preschoolers; and can also adjust their lesson plans to include all children. This is supported by the findings of Lin, et al. (2026) that instructional adaptation improved engagement, achievement, and sense of belonging for all learners, including low-performing students, indicating improved equity in access. In the same vein, Omariba (2025) found that instructional adaptations such as differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning significantly enhance equitable access and learner outcomes.

Findings of the study revealed that attitudes of teachers towards inclusion positively predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone. The study also showed teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education significantly predict equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone. This is as a result of the respondents accepting the fact that teachers: believe that all children can learn regardless of their abilities; support the idea of educating all learners in the same classroom; feel comfortable teaching children with disabilities; believe that inclusive education improves learning outcomes for all children; and can also enjoy working with diverse learners in my classroom. The finding of the study is in line with the findings of

Mejoy et al. (2024) who asserted that teachers with positive attitudes toward inclusion were more likely to adopt inclusive classroom practices, which improved participation and learning opportunities for students with diverse needs. Equally, Krainer et al. (2024) revealed that teachers' positive attitudes and self-efficacy significantly enhance their willingness to implement inclusive strategies, such as differentiated instruction and collaboration.

Conclusion

Inclusive education practices give all children equal opportunity to learning, irrespective of their abilities and disabilities. The study therefore concluded that teacher preparedness for inclusive education practices, classroom management practices, instructional adaptation, and teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education are significant predictors of equity in access to learning opportunities among preschoolers in public nursery schools in Onitsha Education Zone.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers need to adopt more child-centred and differentiated instructional methods to ensure that all learners, including those with special needs, are adequately supported.
2. Curriculum content and delivery methods should be flexible and adaptable to accommodate diverse learners' needs.
3. Effective classroom management practices is required to ensure that inclusive education practices are properly implemented by a

prepared teacher to promote fairness in learning opportunities.

4. There is need for teachers' to show positive attitudes towards inclusive education practices as well as a stronger policy enforcement, and provision of inclusive learning materials to support equitable education.

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