

Social Inclusiveness and Persons with Disability in Southwest Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

It is trite that PLWDs are often excluded in access to life chances, however, how this occur & curtail such, are unknown. This is critical towards improving their social inclusiveness & wellbeing. Data was conducted between June-December 2022, using methodological triangulation. A total of 300 questionnaires & 10 In-depth interviews (IDI), Key Informant Interviews (KII) & Focus Group Discussions (FGD), were used on various stakeholders in the area.

The study reveals that social exclusion is rampant & affecting wellbeing of PWDs. This was in form of both material & non-material content. The study found that PWDs are faced with financial challenges more, social exclusion & difficulties in accessing private & public facilities in the south west states. The paper concludes that there is need for more publicity, sensitization, lobbying & enactment of more laws to push for legislation at the state houses of assembly for the domestication of the Act.

Key words: Social inclusiveness, PLWDs, Life chances, Disability, Nigeria

Introduction

The World Disability report stated that around 15 percent of global population or one billion people are living with various types of disabilities. Out of the total number of disabled people almost 80% live in developing countries (WHO, 2015). In developing countries, 80 – 90 percent of persons with disabilities of working age are without a job, whereas in industrialized and developed countries the figure is between 50 and 70 percent (Gottlieb, Myhill, and Blanck 2017)

In Nigeria, there is dearth of precise figure of persons with disability population and contrasting prevalence rates are usually available across different sources thus, resulting to varying definitions of what disability entails and altering quality of data (Holden, Clark

and Abualghaib 2019). Quite a number of sources have suggested a high prevalence rate of persons living with disability in Nigeria with some degree of variations such as the Nigeria Census of 2006, The Nigerian General Household Survey of 2012 and the National Demographic and Health Survey of 2018 (Haruna, 2019).

Participation of people with disabilities in various aspect of the society such as education, economic, health and political participation is extremely poor when equated to individuals that are not physically challenged in any form. One major reason accountable for this inequality has been ascribed to the fact that people with disabilities experience hindrances in accessing services that able bodied persons have for long taken for granted, including health, education, employment and transport. These difficulties are exacerbated in communities that are disadvantaged such as rural or borderline areas and as such increase the risk of social exclusion and poverty (Ewang, 2019).

Social inclusiveness is a cogent attribute needed for the well-being of persons with disabilities and a main constituent that most government, agencies and organizations should hold pertinent. But, social isolation of persons with physical disabilities is high and their social interactions are only within their immediate family members and caregivers (Maya, 2016). People with disabilities have equal rights and duties as any other individual. Persons with disability have inalienable rights to be actively involved in every and any sectors of the society but most society has various impediments in actualizing this fact. The availability and accessibility of essential services for persons with disability are usually the least concerns of authorities when addressing problems relating to education, employment, economy, and healthcare. Factors responsible for these social problems have been suggested to be lack timely and adequate information about availability of opportunities available at the disposal of the disabled persons, families, relatives and their caregivers. Others were of the opinion that the families of the disabled persons lack financial wherewithal to access these facilities or these facilities are operation below standards with unqualified personnel (Meena, 2017).

There also exist some unintended but persistent institutional impediments stunting the inclusiveness of the disabled persons such as discriminatory laws, policies, strategies or practices. Although, they may be unintended but they hinder the disabled persons from

active participation by not taking into account the needs and circumstances of the disabled. For instance, entrances to buildings of most organizations and companies such as banks do not have ramps for persons using wheelchairs and even when they do, they always have narrow doors making accessibility to the services rendered in these building unattainable (Elekwe and Ebenso, 2016).

The awareness and understanding of disability as a human rights and social inclusion issue is still limited. Mainstreaming of disability in general programs is very limited as there is lack of coordination among the various agencies that caters for the needs of persons with disabilities (Thompson, 2020). Allocation resources and governmental budget for most countries especially the developing worlds in tackling the challenges of people with disability is below acceptable standard and in situations where there are programs designed for the disabled, they are scattered in different ministries and departments beyond the reach of the intended beneficiaries. Local government bodies also do not have enough fund and data to disburse the entitled benefits for people with disabilities (Cheshire, 2018). It is against this identified gap that this study intends to empirically investigate the social inclusion of persons with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria.

Brief Literature Review

Discrimination and stigmatization of persons with disabilities also pose a major barrier to physically challenged persons stemming from the inability to see beyond the impairment and focus on areas where their strength can be best utilized. Rather than focusing on areas of economically productive activities that the disabled persons can participate in, they are usually looked upon with pity. The disabled persons are mostly seen as a charity case in most societies and often been used as a means of siphoning money from international non-governmental organizations rather than emphasizing on the potentials they can add to the production process (Thompson, 2020). Attitudinal barriers also affect disabled person who have business with stigma posing a major bottleneck for people with disabilities to access markets and having poor patronage. The belief, in particular in rural areas, that rituals involving women with cognitive disabilities, including perpetration of sexual violence, bring wealth or prolong life means women with

disabilities often cannot safely engage in markets and trade. (Jerry, Pam, Nnanna & Nagarajan, 2015).

In a study conducted by Inclusive Futures (2019), they discovered that one of the barriers militating against the inclusiveness of persons with disability in relation to education opportunities were lack of physical structures tailored for the disabled, inappropriate format of dissemination of information, poor communication tools in classes, lack of technology to aid learning for the disabled and household poverty. These in turn widened the educational gap between persons with and without disabilities in Nigeria across various levels of education in the country (Cheshire, 2018).

In addressing the barriers of inclusiveness of persons with disabilities, tremendous efforts have been identified by various studies to evaluate the engagement of disabled but they revealed that in most low and middle income economies, participation is extremely low especially in areas such as employment, agriculture and livelihoods. In Nigeria, a lot of laudable efforts have been made in terms of legislation and actions have been made with support from donors and International NGOs but poor implementation still poses a great threat (Meaney-Davis & Coe, 2020). There is a limited evidence base on the impact of training programs on employment and/or livelihoods outcomes of persons with disabilities in developing countries. In Nigeria, the governments have in the times past made efforts to assist and encourage persons with disabilities with vocational skills through rehabilitation and vocational training in different centres across the country. However, studies have shown that skills taught in these centres are insufficient, with neither the provision of training in entrepreneurship skills (e.g. basic numeracy, literacy, marketing or soft skills), nor the offer of, or linking-up of trainees to appropriate and timely provision of access to capital (Fraser and Abu Al Ghaib, 2019).

Participation of people with disabilities in employment is not only an issue related to income, but also a sense of belonging to the community, bringing a contribution to community, and to the individual's social status. Studies have shown that educational achievements have a positive effect on employment and inclusion in the labour market, in particular for the disabled group. A lack of success in the educational system resulted in a permanent weak inclusion in the labour market. There seems to be a positive

correlations between educational history and job status which illustrate that more educated disabled persons were, the less likely to be unemployed (Thompson, 2020).

Inclusiveness of persons with disabilities is an ongoing journey that requires collective effort from individuals, communities, governments, and organizations. By addressing societal attitudes, implementing robust legislative frameworks, promoting accessibility, creating inclusive employment and educational opportunities, and fostering social inclusion, societies can be more equitable, compassionate and inclusive. Embracing the unique abilities and perspectives of persons with disabilities enriches every societies and contributes to the realization of a truly inclusive world for everyone and a feasible solution from poverty (Jonckheere, 2020)

Methodology

The study was carried out in Southwest Nigeria which is one of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria representing geographic, economic and political region of the country's southwest. It comprises of six states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Osun and Oyo. The zone is found along the Atlantic seaboard from the international border with Benin republic in the west to the south-south in east with the North central to the north. Culturally, the vast majority of the zone falls within Yorubaland-the indigenous cultural homeland of Yoruba people, a group which makes up the largest ethnic percentage of southwestern population. Economically, the South West's urban areas—mainly the cities of Lagos and Ibadan—contributes greatly to the Nigerian economy while rural areas lag behind. The region has a population of about 47 million people, around 22% of the total population of the country. Lagos is the most populous city in the South West as well as the most populous city in Nigeria and the second most populous city in Africa. The metropolis and its inner suburbs, together called the Lagos Metropolis Area, form the eighth largest metropolitan area in the world with about 21 million people; other large southwestern cities include (in order by population) Ibadan, Ogbomosho, Ikorodu, Akure, Abeokuta, Oyo, Ife, Ondo City, Ado Ekiti, Iseyin, Sagamu, Badagry, Ilesa, Obafemi Owode, Osogbo, Ikare and Owo.

The study adopted mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative technique, questionnaire method was used to gather data on the disability experience, inclusion of persons with disabilities, support services and intervention programmes for PWDs. The quantitative method consists of structured questionnaires,

which are made of closed ended questions. A total of 1000 questionnaires are administered which were later retrieved, coded and analysed. For the qualitative technique, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), Key informant interviews and interactions were held with the various stakeholders such as, MDAs, Legislators, Politicians/Political Aides, JONAPWD, CSOs/NGOs/FBOs, Operators of Hotels/Schools/Public Building.

The respondents are randomly selected in the three senatorial districts of each of the five states. For the IDIs, 40 in-depth interviews were conducted among the various stakeholders in the south western states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Osun and Oyo. The IDIs allowed the respondents to narrate their experiences as they relate to inclusiveness of PWDs. This method created face-to-face interaction for observing the attitude, behaviours and mood of the respondents on questions raised. For the FGDs, participants were chosen based on age and gender. In other words, the FGDs were both homogeneous and heterogeneous in nature. A total of 10 FGDs session was conducted consisting of 8-12 participants in each of the senatorial districts. The idea behind the research was explained to the participants. Although, the interview guide for the FGDs were well structured to allow for responses from the participants based on their objective and subjective reflections on social inclusion among PWDs. Also, 20 Key Informants Interviews were conducted with informed participants such as JONAPWD and CSOs.

The quantitative data collected was analysed using software package for social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the results. Qualitative methods combine in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KII) for this study. For the qualitative aspect, in-depth interview was used to elicit information in order to have a clearer understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation. Content analysis was employed for analysis, through the Nvivo 8 software. Themes from the interviews and discussion transcripts that have been identified from the range of objectives, theoretical and conceptual frameworks were validated through the deductive method. Information derived from in-depth interview was transcribed and content-analysed under different headings depicting the various aspects of the discussion to complement the quantitative data.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

ON-GOING

THE AUTHORS ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO THE FORD FOUNDATION/ AFRICAN POLLING INSTITUTE FOR THE RESEARCH GRANT

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