

Social Inequalities of Wellbeing, life course and Persons with Disability in Southwest Nigeria

Wahab, M.O

Wahab, E.O

Jawando, J.O

Department of Sociology

Lagos State University, Ojo

Maria.wahab@lasu.edu.ng

Elias.wahab@lasu.edu.ng

Jubril.jawando@lasu.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the social inequalities of wellbeing, life course and persons with disabilities. The study was conducted between June-December 2023 and employed quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative method, a total of 300 questionnaires was used to collect information from the various PWDs in each of the states in South West Nigeria. The qualitative research tools included the In-depth interviews (IDI), Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), were used on various stakeholders in the selected areas. The study reveals that the welfare of PWDs is still a far cry in the Southwestern States. The study found that PWDs are faced with financial challenges more, social exclusion and difficulties in accessing private and public facilities in the south west states. The paper concludes that there is need for more publicity, sensitization, lobbying and enactment of more laws to push for legislation at the state houses of assembly for the domestication of the Act.

Key words: Social inequalities, Wellbeing, Life course, 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).

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).

Methodology

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, domestication and implementation of the disability act and knowledge of the disability act in the south-western states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo and Osun.

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

For the quantitative data, 50 questionnaires each was administered in Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo states totaling 300 to various clusters of PWDs identified in each of the states. The quantitative data analysis involved the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 17 version. Parametric and non-parametric statistical tools were utilized to analyze the generated quantitative data. The univariate analysis involved the use of frequency distributions, percentages, charts and graphs to depict the descriptive statistics on the distribution of the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics.

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.

Theoretical Orientation

The study is anchored on the social model of disability which sees disability as a social creation (Barnes 1992). The model considers disabilities has necessitated by discrimination, social exclusion and accessibility barrier which is different from individual's bodily problems. The social model sees disability to be social oppression, or collective exclusion being experienced by PWDs (Oliver, 1990; Barnes & Mercer, 2004). In a nutshell, bodily impairments are aggravated by social exclusion, oppression and barriers in accessing services that people encounter (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002). The model has received wide acceptance in United Kingdom, United States, Canada and other developed countries because it guarantee the fundamental human rights of PWDs. It is a practical tool for explaining and discovering issues on disadvantage, discrimination and exclusion experienced by PWDs (Oliver, 2004). It is an important model for understanding the systemic oppression of PWDs by non-disabled majority in society and social institutions (Eleweke & Ebenso, 2016). Therefore, this study examines the disability experiences, inclusion of persons of persons with disabilities, support services and intervention programmes for PWDs and domestication and implementations of the disability acts in South-west Nigeria.

Tentative Findings

The study shows respondents' socio-demographic characteristics in the six states in southwest Nigeria. The gender composition shows a larger percentage of females' participation (54%) across the six states in southwest Nigeria. The World Disability Report (2011) says that over 25 million Nigerians have at least one disability and that more than 50 percent of the 25 million Nigerians living with disability are females corroborates the reason for this high number of female respondents. The respondents' marital status indicates that 54% constitutes those who are single and 39% are married. The respondents' religious affiliation shows that majority of the respondents 46% were Christians in the six states in southwest Nigeria. This is expected, as the people in southern parts of Nigeria are predominantly Christians. Furthermore, the respondents' ethnicity indicates that 75% were Yoruba speaking people. Again, this is expected as the study areas are predominantly Yoruba states. The respondents' educational attainment indicates that those who completed secondary constitute the majority (42%) across the six states in southwest Nigeria. The respondents' age category shows that 57% were in age bracket of 18-37, which can be categorised as productive age. Also, the respondents' occupations show that unemployed youth and adult (27%) constitute the majority and those who are self-employed (21%) across the six states in southwest Nigeria. Apart from Lagos and Ekiti that have a sizeable number of PWDs in the public sector, it is not the same story in the four other states like Ondo, Osun, Ogun and Oyo. The respondents' monthly income show that 75% earn less than N50, 000 per month and another 16% monthly income

range between N50,001-N100,000. Lastly, respondents' resident pattern shows that majority (73%) lives in rural area and 27% are urbanites.

Disability Experience

Disability exists in several forms and types. WHO (2014) identifies 6 broad areas of disability such as: impaired sight or difficulty in seeing; impaired hearing or difficulty in hearing; difficulty in communicating; difficulty in walking; mind or mental impairment or difficulty in concentration/remembering; and difficulty with self-care. Disability can be said to be the state of being incomplete physically, mentally or otherwise. Disability may also occur through accident, spiritual attack and injection. Majority of the respondents (49%) in south-west are physically challenged, follow by 26% who are hearing impaired. Studies have shown that the major causes of motor disability are injuries from accidents on the road, at home, or the workplace; domestic violence; birth trauma; and infectious diseases such as polio and leprosy (Meyer and Mok, 2008; WHO, 2014).

In terms of how PWDs see themselves, 47% of the respondents see themselves as normal persons in the society and 36% of the respondents see themselves different from other members in the society. This is averred from the responses obtained from the field. Regarding the greatest challenge faced by PWDs, majority of the respondents 32.7% identified finance as one of their greatest challenge, 27.7% mentioned discrimination and 13.3% alluded to social exclusion. It is very glaring that PWDs are also faced with a lot of challenges including human rights abuses, stigmatization, discrimination, violence, and lack of access to healthcare, housing and education (World Health Organisation, 2011). There is also the issue of misconception about PWDs as most people see them as alms beggars in the society. PWDs are affected by the inability to get jobs and even when they eventually gain employment, they face severe discrimination and prejudice in the course of their work. Work is an important activity for all human as it is a means by which we support our existence and cater for loved ones and ourselves. PWDs have in many cases been unable to measure up to chances nor have the opportunity to pursue jobs or do businesses, rather, they have experience segregation, discrimination, stereotype, and shame at work and in business environments. In terms of denial of job opportunity qualified for because of disability, majority (62%) of the respondents affirmed that they have been denied jobs they are qualified for because of their disabilities. Concerning the most common forms of abuse that PWDs suffer from their state, majority of the respondents affirmed that discrimination by the members of the public, prejudice, physical abuse, victimization, social exclusion, discrimination at workplace, harassment by government officials and poor physical structure for mobility.

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

